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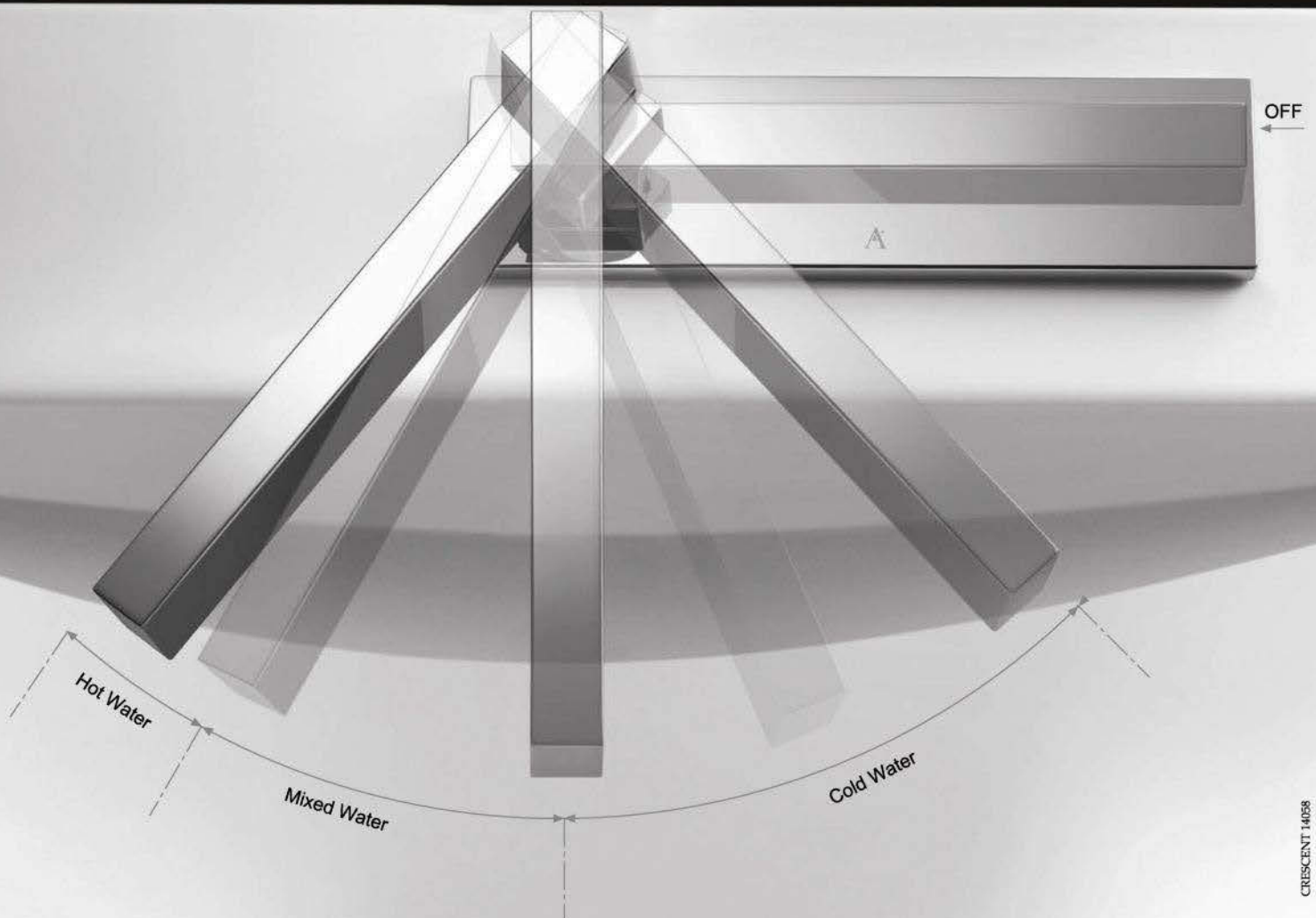




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Linea's striking design feature is the graceful swinging motion of its spout, which also acts as its on-off mechanism. The multi-purpose spout pivots to form an arc that controls the temperature of water along its curve, allowing for a jet of cold, mixed or hot water at different positions.

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PHOTOGRAPH: TOM PARKER STYLING: STYLECRACKER.COM



Shaka Surf Club's Ishita Malaviya.
On her: **swimsuit, SAHA at Oceaniss;**
printed shorts, Roxy

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Model: **Malia** at the **Luna2** private hotel in **Seminyak, Bali** Photograph by **Michel Figuet** On Model: bathing suit and sunglasses, both model's own

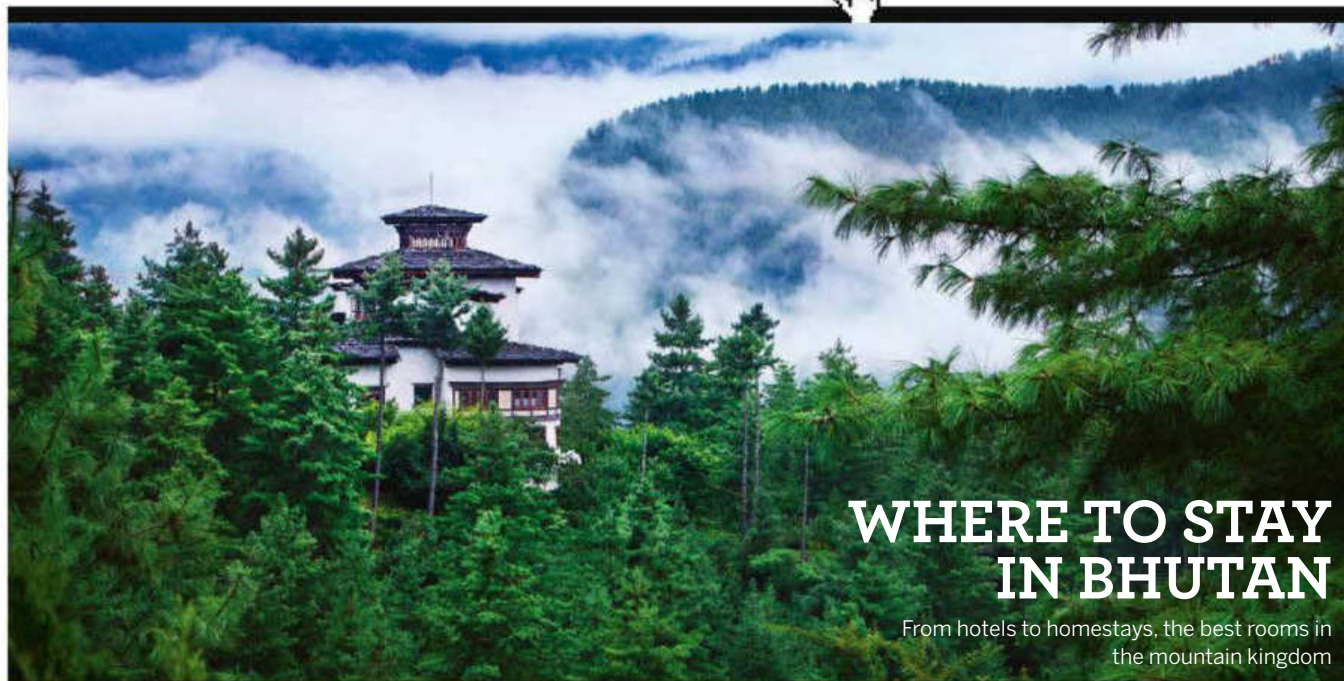
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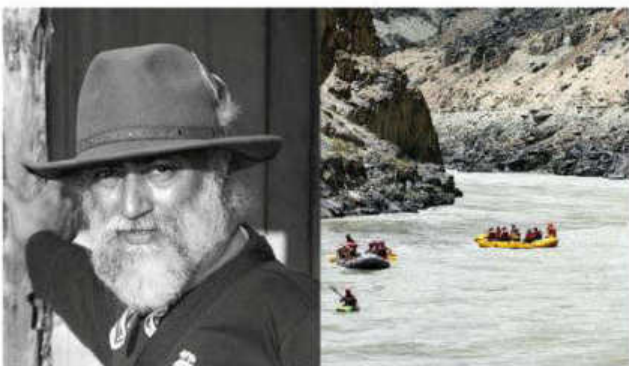
Q We asked our contributors: “Which is your favourite hotel in Asia and why?”



↑ GOVIND DHAR **Who:** Editor & journalist; *The Informer*, p24
A: “Soneva Kiri on Koh Kood, Thailand. The feeling of being at the precipice of the whimsies of nature is overwhelming at first. And then you wonder why the rest of the world can’t be more like this lush, overgrown island. It’s luxury and the tropics at their most compelling.”



↑ NINA LUDOLPHI **Who:** Managing editor at *The Guide Istanbul* & writer; *Shopping in Istanbul*, p114
A: “The Four Seasons Maldives at Kuda Huraa. My favourite part is that you can choose between sunrise or sunset bungalows. Their poolside restaurant overlooks the ocean and serves succulent yellowfin tuna steaks Maldivian style—a must try!”



↑ MANDIP SINGH SOIN **Who:** Mountaineer & writer; *First Word*, p22
A: “Banjaar Tola, Kanha National Park is great with its quiet setting along the Banjaar River. Designed like a Moorish tent, this Taj safari lodge is superbly deluxe, with a wildlife experience that is outstanding.”

↓ TOM PARKER **Who:** CNT contributing photographer; *Surfing in India*, p28
A: “The Mudhouse in Sri Lanka—swimming in the one of its 4 lakes lying on my back amongst the waterlilies whilst colourful birds dive into the water all around—it’s the only place in the world I feel truly relaxed.” [@tom_parker_photographer](#)



↓ AYUSHI DALMIA **Who:** Freelance designer
A: “Sofitel Krabi Phokeethra Golf & Spa Resort for its So Spa with L’Occitane products. It’s set in a serene spa oasis. The menu consists of global rituals, signature treatments and French beauty therapies. This one definitely has my stamp of approval with a golden star!” [@ayushi.dalmia](#)



↓ JASREEN MAYAL KHANNA **Who:** CNT Senior features writer; *Surfing in India*, p28
A: “The slick Miskawaan Luxury Beachfront Villas in Koh Samui are great for a mixed group vacation. They have an infinity pool and masseurs for the couples, party vans for the singles, plus private chefs and gaming consoles for the kids.”



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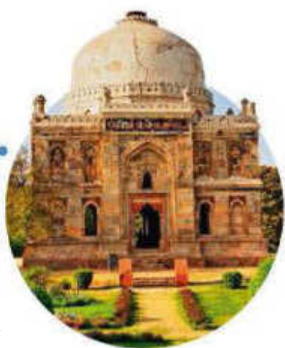
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MY TOP 5 GARDENS IN THE WORLD

1 LODI GARDENS, NEW DELHI

"Part of growing up in Mumbai is learning to say you hate Delhi (even if you've never been). But I became a Delhi fan the morning I walked through Lodi Gardens for the first time. To see young people strolling hand-in-hand amidst so much history and beauty made me fall in love with our capital."



2 ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, KEW, UK

"I love that these gardens are only a half hour outside London, and that there is always something happening there: a festival, an exhibit, a movie screening. But my favourite time to visit is the spring, as I adore flowers: the pink roses and carpets of blue glory-of-the-snow fill me with wonder."



3 ALHAMBRA, SPAIN

"Granada is such a fascinating city, reflecting the Moorish history of Spain. And the gardens of the Alhambra palace are possibly my most favourite of all. There are pools of water (a known feature of Islamic-style gardens), windy walkways, pink roses and fragrant oranges and myrtles and pine, and it simply makes you never want to leave."



4 VERSAILLES, FRANCE

"The gardens of Versailles took 40 years to create; and it shows. Truthfully, I find them even more stunning than the château, with their perfect landscaping and graceful sculptures and fountains. I haven't revisited them since I was 18, but the memory of that magical light stays with me."



5 HANGZHOU BOTANICAL GARDENS, CHINA

"Hangzhou is where Chinese Emperors spent their summers, and one walk along its West Lake is enough to understand why. The willow trees sway in the breeze; there are little bridges and quiet pagodas in which to contemplate the sheer beauty of the setting. And when it rains, the mist that flows through the green is as romantic as a Mumbai monsoon."



When I was seventeen, I arrived in the US to go to university in a tiny little town in Pennsylvania that time forgot. There was one main street, with a single bar, and no restaurants to speak of except for one, named Beefeaters, which was useless since I was mostly vegetarian at the time. I graduated early (partly because I was a geek, and mostly because I just wanted to get out of there and move to New York) and figured I'd never have reason to return to Bradford, PA ever again. Then, this summer, I did. My college invited me back to deliver the commencement speech. I was so caught up in the writing and my travel plans, I didn't even consider what it might be like to return to this weird, faraway, special place where I had learnt so much. Turns out, I was overwhelmed. The town is still small, and mostly forgotten. My professors are still teaching and living there; they're still some of the most wonderful, passionate and intelligent people I've met. The old bar on Main Street is now a Pakistani-run kebab restaurant. But the biggest surprise I discovered was that, only 15 minutes from my small campus, had stood a gorgeous hunting and fishing lodge from the 1920s; a luxe Relais & Chateaux property, which Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong both visited, and where rooms go for upwards of US\$500 a night. How could it be so close, and yet I had never known of it before? What other secrets had this town been keeping from me? And why had I not found them? It seemed absurd. I guess I simply didn't know where to look. Buried in books, break-ups and some irrational negativity, I'd missed it—and missed out. I managed to stay at The Lodge at Glendorn on my last night of the trip, and sat drinking cocktails with old and new friends, and fell asleep in a quaint, beautiful bedroom by a crackling fire. I wondered how many beautiful things we miss just because we aren't looking up from our phones, or the smallness of our lives, or because we have preconceived ideas, or just because we don't know what we are looking for, and nobody thought to tell us. Or maybe we just discover secrets when the time is right. This issue is full of them: secrets and ideas and tips and information so you can discover this crazy, delicious continent we call Asia. Maybe your time is now.

Divia Thani

Divia Thani Daswani Editor

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INHALE RISK, EXHALE ADVENTURE

Adrenaline junkie **Mandip Singh Soin** looks back on four decades of travel and finds he is still hungry for more

As a teenager, I was inspired to venture into the unknown after reading Sir Edmund Hillary's *Nothing Venture, Nothing Win*. The 'win' has always been both physical and emotional; soup for the soul, as it were.

The wonderful thing about going on an adventure is that in its essence lies a happy addiction, where the 'inhalation' is pure thrill: hanging off a ledge at 20,000ft on a mountain face, or feeling the rush of the air while hurtling towards Earth from a plane. Of course, it is always possible to travel in a safe and planned manner, and one must.

I first went on a Himalayan trek to the Kuari Pass in Uttarakhand, and promptly fell in love with the views of the majestic, snowcapped mountains and with the wonderful villagers. I've returned several times since, each experience richer and more fulfilling. This ongoing quest to discover the unknown, to push my mental and physical limits, to see how I deal

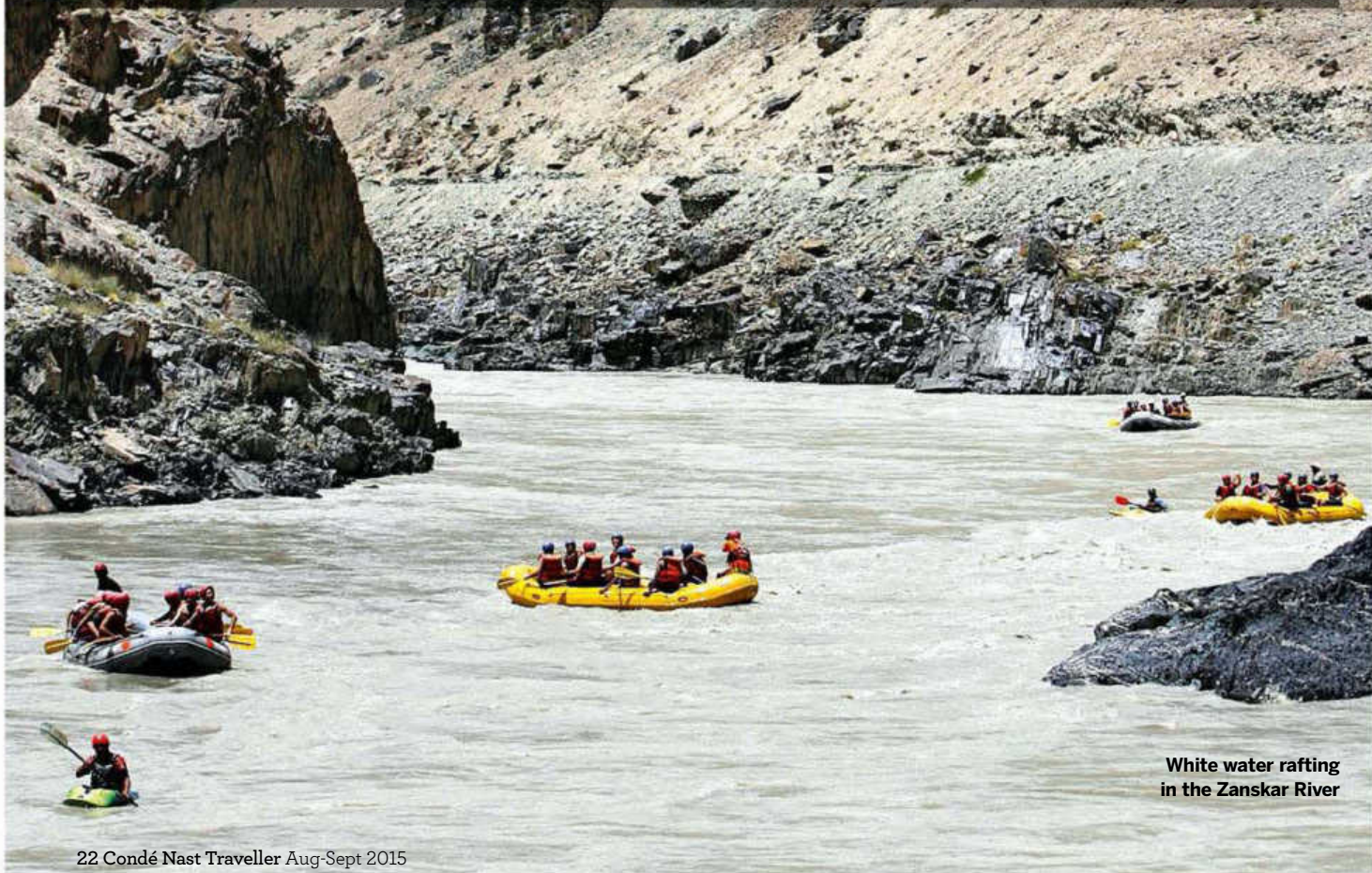
with adversity, to engage in new outdoor adventures, has become so much a part of me that each journey feels only natural.

I remember once trekking in Nanda Devi National Park, with a British expedition. While they went on to climb the peak of Kalanka, I met a Kiwi and we both decided to climb (solo) a peak called Bamchu. Even though I had never climbed solo before, it was the fear of the unknown that made the challenge attractive. Then there was the time I spent in the Andamans, sailing on small boats between islands, studying tribes, and deep-sea fishing. Years later, I returned to Barren Island to climb India's only active volcano. I have also found great joy in rafting down the awe-inspiring Zaskar River gorge, cycling from Delhi to Kathmandu, navigating rivers in Madagascar, sailing in the Mozambique channel, riding camels in the Gobi desert and trekking and riding horses in Mongolia. You discover so much about your own capabilities, your levels

of endurance and courage, your beliefs, strengths and weaknesses.

Even after four decades of adventure travel, I find novelty and excitement as each trip is unique and fraught with its own magical/manic moments. Last year in Namibia's Damaraland, we were tracking rhinos on foot. Suddenly, we were confronted by a big mother rhino with her cub, snorting and moving her ears menacingly, only 100 paces from where we stood. We observed her silently, ecstatic at the chance to see her so close, and yet, aware that she could easily charge straight at us. Thankfully, she didn't.

After all this time, the greatest lesson I've learnt is to smile and take the rough with the smooth. Part of the fun of going on adventurous journeys lies in later relating stories to friends over rounds of beer—and then turning the coasters over to start jotting down plans for the next. **Mandip Singh Soin FRGS, mountaineer, explorer and founder of Ixex Expeditions.**



White water rafting
in the Zaskar River

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Q&A In conversation with

DHARSHAN MUNIDASA

With two restaurants—Nihonbashi and Ministry of Crab—in San Pellegrino's Asia's 50 Best list, Sri Lanka's top chef explains what makes him tick. By Govind Dhar

How does your heritage play out in your food?

My identity is Sri Lankan even though I am half Japanese. Thankfully, my palate is coded for both cuisines—at Nihonbashi, we do authentic Japanese, and at Kaema Sutra, it's modern Sri Lankan.

Tell us a bit about how your culinary style and ethos have evolved over the years.

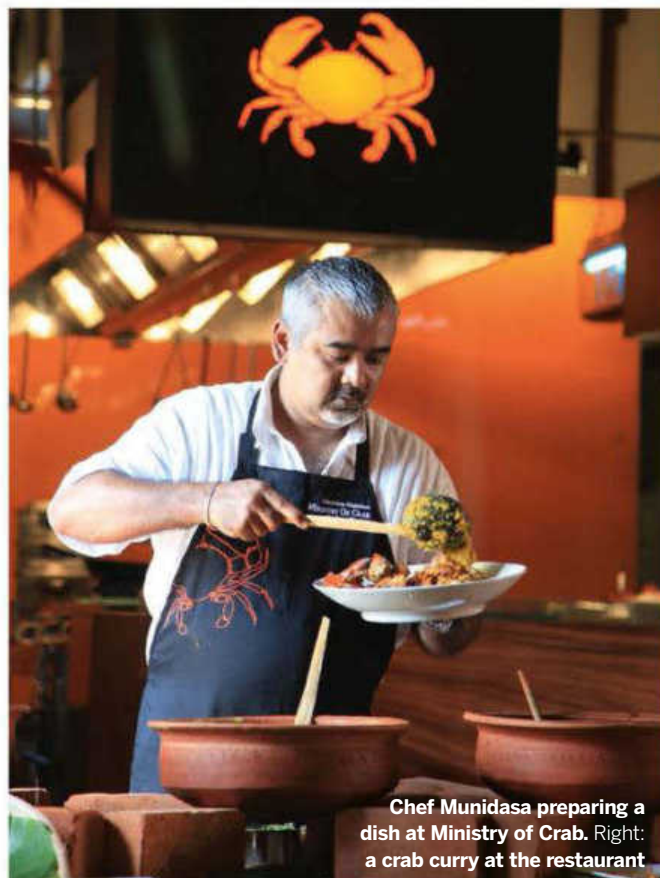
The key to being a good cook is understanding taste. In fact, I approach food from the other side: eating. Then, I've been lucky to develop relationships built on the foundation of food. I'll explain what I mean: over the last 20 years that I've visited the Tsukiji fish market in Tokyo, sea urchin, crab and fish merchants have shared their food with me, so there is a deep personal connection. In Japan, if you really like the food, and you ask them, they'll show you how to do it. By this I don't mean you're going to get it exactly right the first time. It's been a lot of trial and error and I have had time to experiment in my kitchens.

What's the secret to Japanese cooking?

Dashi! Dashi is the backbone of the cuisine, and comes from making soup stock. There's a huge interpretation divide between Japanese food in and outside Japan. Also, what Japanese people eat at home is very different from what they eat at a restaurant.

How did Ministry of Crab come about?

I make it a habit to visit fish markets often, even globally. I found good crab here, so that's how I started Ministry of Crab. I thought we would do 30 crabs a day. Today, we're doing over



Chef Munidasa preparing a dish at Ministry of Crab. Right: a crab curry at the restaurant

100kg of crab a day. There's no excuse to not have excellent crab in Sri Lanka, when such high-quality stuff gets exported.

What is your food philosophy?

Keep it simple. We are very ingredients-based; I think knowing your ingredients is essential. At Nihonbashi, we buy the tuna whole and cut it here so my staff knows what salmon and tuna look like. If you have quality ingredients, making good food is not difficult, but making good food with bad ingredients is very hard, which is where technique comes in.

Share some foodie memories with us.

When I was a kid in Sri Lanka, a lady would come by, selling

crabs door-to-door. My brother and I actually used to play with them! We got pinched from time to time, but it was great fun. And I remember once, in Japan, when I was 12, my grandmother gave me 1,000 yen. I spent it all on live prawns. My family simply didn't understand why. "Don't you get them in Sri Lanka?" they asked, incredulous. I said, "Yes, but we don't get them live to make sashimi." My aunt refused to touch them and screamed when I peeled them; they wrapped themselves around my fingers. I ate all ten. (By the way, I did the same thing two years ago at my aunt's house, but now, no one says anything to me!)

Since you love to eat, what are your favourite places



I remember once, in Japan, when I was 12 years old, my grandmother gave me 1,000 yen. I spent it all on live prawns.

to eat at, both at home and abroad?

Here, in Colombo, we have a large esplanade near the beach, with a number of small eateries that do some absolutely fantastic Sri Lankan street food. In fact, the roast chicken on the street is what inspired me to do one at Kaema Sutra. Then, London Grill and Café Français are good for steaks, and the black pork curry at Gallery Café is unique. Abroad, I like eating at stand-alone places whose names I don't remember—but they're all in Japan. There are ramen joints like Choka Soba Inoue, in Tokyo, and places where I relish the stingray and frog legs. I like Waku Ghin and Iggy's in Singapore. 🍣

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What's happening this month ★ Boston ★ Perth ★ London

RIDE THE

Jasreen Mayal Khanna goes surfing in Karnataka and finds the rush impossibly addictive

WAVE

Agenda



There's an open secret in the *Condé Nast Traveller* office: I've had a girl crush on Lisa Haydon ever since I laid eyes on her during our first anniversary issue cover shoot. When I finally got the chance to interview her, she completely lived up to my ideal: a perfect mix of sun-kissed beauty, bohemian spirit and sharp wit. We spoke about her love for beaches and she told me how she dated a pro surfer as a teenager and started surfing to fit in with his gang. The sport has taken her all over the world, from Australia to Bali, and she's even done a story on surfing in Puducherry for the magazine (<http://cnt.in/soulsurfing>). That got me wondering, because India is not traditionally considered a big surfing spot; the pros don't typically come here to surf. But as I began asking around about surfing in the country, I got more recommendations than I expected. From Karnataka to Odisha, it seemed India's coastline was blooming with surf schools and amateur enthusiasts. Curious, I decided to find out more.



I wanted to try out this new activity in a relatively pristine environment and Karnataka seemed to have the right mix of infrastructure and isolation. Also, there are two surfing schools within driving distance of Mangalore airport: **Ashram Surf Retreat** (www.surfingindia.net) in Mulki and **Shaka Surf Club** (www.theshakasurfclub.wordpress.com) in Kodi Bengre. With admittedly few accommodation options, I rented a vacation house called **The**

Blue Matsya (www.thebluematsya.com), conveniently located between the two schools. Ashram Surf Retreat was founded by Jack Hebner, widely considered the pioneer of India's surf movement. The Surfing Swami, as he's now known, came to India in the 1970s looking for spiritual guidance and discovered some great surf spots along the way. He set up the school in 2004 to promote yoga, meditation and surfing; today, it also offers activities such as kayaking and paddle-boarding.

At my first lesson, I had only one goal: to stand. "You need to feel the thrill of riding a wave," my instructor, Druva, explained. "Once you feel that, you'll find the motivation it takes to become a true surfer." We powered across the river mouth in an inflatable →

Clockwise from top left: Shaka Surf Club's Tushar giving a lesson; The Blue Matsya's living room; Lisa Haydon surfing in Puducherry. **Previous pages, from left:** Surfboards at Soul & Surf; Ishita of Shaka. **On Ishita:** tangerine swimsuit, SAHA at Oceaniss; printed shorts, Roxy



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Agenda

raft and reached an empty beach on the other side. He took me straight into the water and taught me the correct way to lie on the board, roll with the oncoming wave, crouch into position and finally, to stand. Again and again, I tried, again and again, I fell. An hour later, with sea water stinging my eyes and the sun burning my neck, I was almost ready to give up. But Druva had faith. "I know you're going to stand soon." After about 25 failed attempts and a lot of water lodged in my ears, I did it. As I stood on the board with my hand thrown up for balance, I felt a pure, heart-thumping, wave-roaring adrenaline rush. It was like flying on water and I couldn't wait to try again.

The next day, I drove to Kodi Bengre, a sleepy, picturesque village off the NH17, flanked by the Arabian Sea and

emerald backwaters. I was all ready for my lesson with Shaka Surf Club, run by Ishita Malaviya, India's first female pro surfer, and her partner, Tushar Pathiyan. As we simulated the motions of surfing on dry sand, they told me how they'd learnt the basics at Ashram Surf Retreat and then taught themselves. As college kids at Manipal University, with only one board between them, they would give lessons to fellow students to raise money and build their dream surf school. "Initially it was a few foreigners who came to learn with us," says Tushar. "Now it's more than double that number and increasingly, more and more Indians are looking to try the sport." And clearly, supply is responding to demand: including these two in Karnataka, there are over a dozen surf schools along →

**AS I finally
managed to
stand, I felt
a pure, heart-
thumping,
wave-roaring
rush of
adrenaline**

Surfing off the Great
Nicobar island

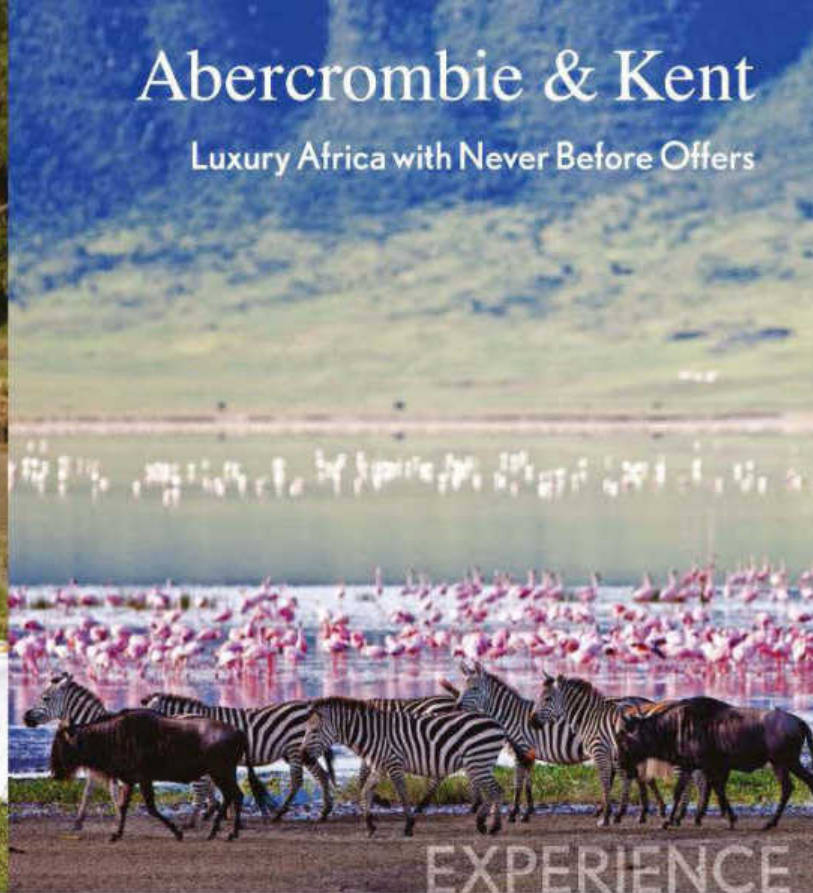
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India's coastline, just from Goa to Varkala to Covelong Point near Chennai. Tushar recalls India's first surfing festival, in Mahabalipuram in 2011, which around 30 surfers attended. Compare this to the upcoming Mahabs Surf Classic Festival, which is expected to have 100 registered participants and 3,000 audience members. Today enthusiasts of all levels surf, travel to surf and train to be certified instructors. This is especially surprising for India's coastal region, which has no major reef breaks, unlike Bali or Sri Lanka.

Two months later, on Utorda beach in Goa, I met Julian Dronov, the owner of the **Banana Surf School** (www.goasurf.com), who explained this surge of interest. "I'd been teaching in Bali for five years before coming to Goa," he said. "I realised it has the perfect conditions for beginners. Students learn three times faster on these waves, while Indonesian islands are better for intermediate-level surfers who are looking for bigger waves." His words echoed those of Rahul Malaney, the



founder of **Vayu Waterman's Village** (www.vayuoceanadventures.in), a surf school on Ashwem beach. Even my instructors in Karnataka teach beginners here, but travel for their own surfing to the Andamans and Bali.

Another common sentiment among surfers in India is a concern for the

environment and the local community. The Shaka team employs locals to take care of housekeeping, and teaches the village kids free of cost, while Ashram Surf Retreat organises regular post-monsoon clean-up drives. "This holistic thinking is a by-product of the surfing lifestyle, which brings you closer to your natural surroundings and makes you conscious of how you live," says Ishita. Further down the coast, **Soul & Surf** (www.soulandsurf.com), a B&B on Kerala's Varkala beach, is another example. The cosy 15-room guest house, which also offers yoga and surfing lessons, was started by Ed and Sophie Templeton, an English couple who quit their jobs in 2008 to travel the world. Once they reached Varkala, they simply didn't want to leave, and in 2010, Soul & Surf was born. "When we started, the fishermen in the area would ask us what the point was of riding a board into the sea; they just couldn't figure →

Clockwise from top left: the view from The Blue Matsya; the Surfing Swami with a friend; grilled pomfret, a popular local dish

PHOTOGRAPHS: TOM PARKER



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Surfing in Mulki
during the monsoon

PHOTOGRAPH: RAMMOHAN PARAMJAE

Goa is perfect for beginners. Students learn three times faster on these waves

us out,” says manager Raffael Kably. “Now we organise a Sunday Surf Club free of cost for the children in Varkala, so that the locals can participate in the sport as well.” Most of the staff at the resort is from the local community and have been with Ed and Sophie right from the start.

Raffael’s story itself is an interesting one, exemplifying some of the laidback surf culture that is seeping in as the sport grows. After completing his Sound & Light Engineering degree from Singapore, he was working as an ad film producer in Mumbai. On a whim, he took a bus to Mangalore with his Hungarian friend and spent some time learning the ropes with Tushar and Ishita. When he returned home, his long working hours and unhealthy urban lifestyle began to trouble him; he longed for the sea. He had started looking for surfing jobs all over the world when he heard about Soul & Surf looking to scale up and hire management staff. “I was scared as hell to take the plunge. I thought I’d just go for three months, then it became six, which became two seasons—and now Ed and Sophie are like family to me.”

Raffael isn’t the only one whose life was changed by surfing. Murthy Megavan was a fisherman when he happened to see the Surfing Swami in action at Covelong Point, back in 2001. Intrigued, he asked the surfer if he could borrow his board to try out the sport—and managed to stand on his first attempt! Three years later, Murthy lost everything he had in the tsunami. But a chance meeting with Israeli surfer Yotam Agam led to lessons. With the support of Yotam and Chennai-based businessman Arun Vasu, Murthy opened his own school at Covelong Point, raised money to send the village kids to school and taught them how to surf after hours. Today, he is one of the top Indian surfers in the Masters division (over 28 years). Murthy is a prime example of the effect surfing can have on India’s coastal communities, especially fisherfolk. Following his inspiring story, →



others from his village have also tried the sport and are now creating waves in India's surf scene. They are used to spending hours out at sea, which gives them a natural affinity for the sport. It also offers them a new lifestyle—of surfing in the day and fishing at night.

Besides coastal communities, surfing is also getting popular among tourists. "People used to come to Goa for parties and raves but now, they prefer activities like surfing which bring them close to nature," Julian told me.

This is also leading to an interest in other aspects of the sport. Rammohan Paranjape is possibly India's first and only surf photographer; he learnt from the Surfing Swami nine years ago and has shot surfing expeditions everywhere, including the Andamans and Lakshadweep. **Temple Surfboards** (www.templeurfboards.com) is the first company in India to make boards and **Go Left** (www.goleft.in) is a new surf clothing company co-founded by Jill Dsouza and Soul & Surf's Raffael Kably. The shop at



Vayu Waterman's Village is a great stop for all your surfing needs. "It's not just the activity that is growing," said Rammohan. "The phenomenon is bringing with it the laidback lifestyle that surfing is associated with. The live-to-surf attitude is going to take root as the sport grows."

I see proof of this everywhere, on my Instagram feed, in the testimonials of surfing instructors, but most importantly, in the memories of my own experience. The development and infrastructure surrounding the sport is still in a fairly nascent stage, and should you sign up to learn, you'll probably live in a rented cottage or camping tent. But you'll get to witness the beginning of a cool new lifestyle before it acquires the trappings of commercialism. Perhaps surfing off India's coast is like skiing in Gulmarg: it makes sense to learn the ropes closer to home before venturing out to conquer the world. And, like any adventure sport, it gets under your skin and leaves you wanting more. So consider yourself warned and try it at your own risk. As for me, I'm well and truly addicted to the ride. 🏄

Clockwise from top left: a house in Kodi Bengre; Ishita and Tushar at Shaka Surf Club; Murthy Megavan, a fisherman-turned-pro-surfer

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BOSTON, US

"The biggest adjustment for Indian students moving to the East Coast is the cold weather. Get a **Barbour jacket** (www.barbour.com) for the fall, and a **Canada Goose jacket** (www.canada-goose.com) and **Ugg boots** (www.uggaustralia.com) for the winter, all available on **Newbury Street** or at **Copley Place Mall** (www.simon.com). **Bed, Bath & Beyond** (www.bedbathandbeyond.com) is great for household essentials. Speaking of housing, it is expensive, but most universities have on-campus residences. Bayridge Residence (www.bayridgeresidence.com) is an independent student and cultural centre in Backbay that offers housing for women. The public transport system is well-connected, but closes at midnight. Taxis are not easily available, so download the Uber app. The food and nightlife scene in Boston is always buzzing with students. The North End and Back Bay are good neighbourhoods to eat out. Indian food is easily available—whenever I'm homesick, I go to **Dosa-N-Curry** (www.dosa-n-curry.com) in Somerville to get my fill. **GrubHub** and **Instacart** are reliable apps for food and grocery delivery." **AYESHA MANGALDAS** studies psychology at Harvard University

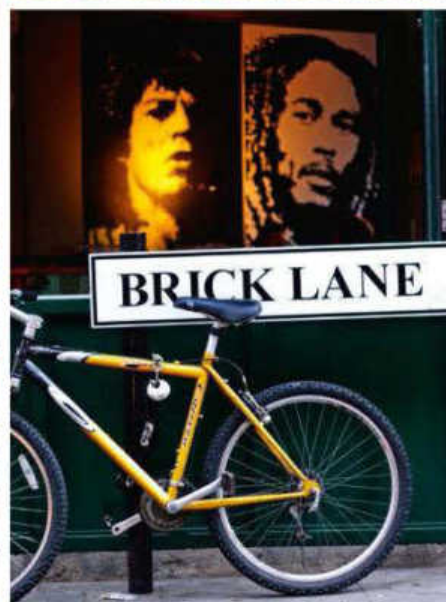
LONDON, UK

"London's size may be daunting, but **Transport for London** (www.tfl.gov.uk) makes it easy to navigate. Apply online for a student Oyster card. Central London is expensive: look for student accommodation via **Nido Student Living** (www.thenidocollection.com) and **Unite Student Housing** (www.unite-students.com). If you're very lucky, you might find small, but cosy and affordable apartments in King's Cross and Shoreditch (the latter has great bars, too). British weather is notoriously unreliable, so keep an umbrella or hooded jacket handy. Shop at **Oxford Street** or **Westfield mall** (www.uk.westfield.com). **Primark** (www.primark.com) is great for affordable everyday apparel, while Camden has some lovely vintage shops. London has countless cool places to hang out, such as **Cereal Killer café** on Brick Lane Street (www.cerealkillercafe.co.uk) and **Serpentine Bar & Kitchen** (www.benugo.com) for pizzas. Walk off the calories in Hyde Park." **MANASI MEHTA** is a student of graphic design at the University of the Arts →



“The biggest adjustment for Indian students moving to Boston is the cold weather. Gear up”

Clockwise from top left: a pair of Ugg boots; a deli in Boston's North End; stores on Newbury Street; deck chairs to lounge on in Hyde Park, London; Brick Lane, home to great cafés and shopping; the LSE, one of London's premier universities. Previous page: the Harvard rowing crew at the autumn regatta



Wish you were here?

A Goa within Goa—once you arrive at The Lalit Golf & Spa Resort—you'll have no reason to leave



Escape the madding crowds of the north and travel south. Why? Because there's so much more to this paradise than just parties, packed shacks, flea markets and over-commercialised beaches. Revel in the simple pleasures of life—solitude, multi-hued sunsets, salty breeze—in the inordinately beautiful South Goa, home to one of Goa's best kept secrets—The Lalit Golf & Spa Resort.

It's got its own beach—one kilometre long. A sea-facing Double T nine-hole links golf course. A signature spa that offers a complete holistic experience. There's even a fully-loaded water sports facility, a helipad for those flying chartered, an award-winning private beach shack and some of the best

restaurants in all of Goa. Spread over 85 acres, the resort offers 255 lavish suites and 10 luxury villas interspersed amidst beautifully manicured gardens, all showcasing romantic Baroque-Portuguese style architecture and traditional Goan design. Even the most hard-to-please will be spoilt for choice at this all-suite luxury resort.

Golf-loving folk can tee off in style at the resort's Goa Golf Greens—an international standard, double-tee nine-hole links course—Goa's only championship golf course. It's equipped with trained staff, caddies and a fleet of deluxe carts to ensure your experience is truly world-class. Spa lovers can indulge in pampering treatments at Rejuve – The Spa, where special aroma, ayurvedic, herbal and natural therapies are on offer. The spa also houses a salon, state-of-the-art gym and world-class outdoor pool. Then, don't miss Corta's, one of Goa's best-known shacks located at the hotel. Rest assured to be served the freshest catch of the day, and swing by in the afternoon for special sundowner cocktails. Veri Feni, decorated with paintings by renowned Indian cartoonist Mario Miranda, is another great spot to sit back and relax over wines, beers, spirits and cigars while playing a game of cards or snooker. For a quick bite head to



Gazebo, the Polynesian-themed sunken bar or if hunger strikes in the middle of the night, Canacona, the resort's 24-hour multi-cuisine restaurant gives you a fine variety of Goan, Indian, Oriental and Continental fare.

Your relationship with this place will never end. You may have other flirtations, even fleeting affairs, but in the end, this is where you will return.

For more information visit, www.thelalit.com or contact General Manager Mr. Sudhir Jena at sjena@thelalit.com

THE 
LaLiT





Barney's Beanery,
a popular diner

LOS ANGELES, US

"Los Angeles is known not only for Hollywood but also world-class universities like UCLA and USC. And while the idea of soaking up the Californian sun is great, make sure to carry a jacket; evenings get chilly.

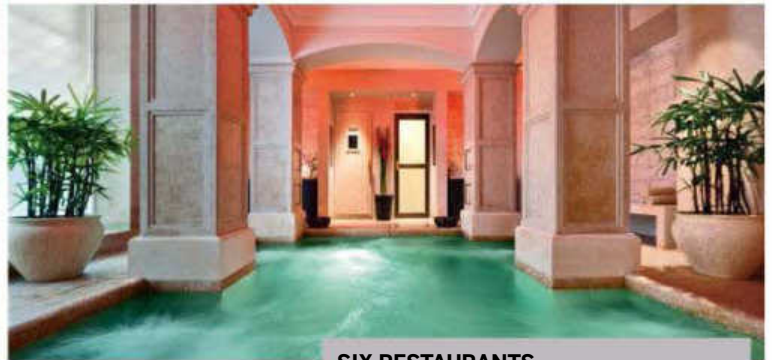
Get around in Yellow Cabs (remember that these require you to tip the driver), Uber or get a **California Drivers License** (www.dmv.ca.gov) if you are there for a long period; it may be cheaper to rent a car. There's also a pretty extensive bus network if you're on a budget. On-campus housing varies—you could find double occupancy accommodation or even room for five people.

Barney's Beanery (www.barneysbeanery.com) is a diner that's an undergrad magnet, while graduates head to **The Glendon Bar & Kitchen** (www.glendonla.com). But a universal favourite is the sheesha at **Habibi Café** (www.habibicafe.com). When you're craving some alone time to read or write, **Espresso Profeta** (+1 310 208 3375) is a safe bet. Indian food can be found easily: **Trader Joe's** (www.traderjoes.com) does ready-to-eat Indian meals; hit restaurants like **India Jones Chow Truck** (indiajoneschowtruck.com) in Santa Monica. Or just bag up on Indian groceries at **Samosa House** (www.samosahouse.com) in Westwood or **Kavita Groceries** (+1 310 559 0106) on Venice Boulevard. Tip: get Ralphs and CVS cards to make grocery shopping a breeze.

Speaking of cost-cutting, **Groupon** (www.groupon.com) offers discounts for everything. Students at USC and UCLA also get discounts at a number of theme parks and movie theatres, and these are sometimes extended to their families. Finally, beauty →

Everyday Getaway

Beat the monsoon blues at the Grand Hyatt Goa that has curated special experiences to occupy you while it pours outside



Whether you are staying at the Grand Hyatt Goa or visiting the resort for the day, get involved in one of their exclusive monsoon activities to make your Goa trip unforgettable.

KICK-STARTING YOUR WEEK

On Mondays, cleanse the body of toxins and relax your mind at the renowned Shamana Spa, with a specially designed Detox program—a combination of traditional yoga asanas, aqua exercises and spa treatments from 8am to 1pm. Learn to cook your favourite Indian recipes including Goan curry or prawn pickle on Tuesdays with special cooking lessons at Chulha with the help of expert chefs from 5pm to 7pm.

MID-WEEK

Indulge in small plates like Spanish Tapas and Japanese Yakitori paired with specially selected beers at the Capiz Bar on Wednesdays from 4pm to midnight. Start your weekend early at Chulha's cocktail bar on Thursdays from 7pm onwards. Indulge in the various Indian inspired cocktails like Mumbai Sugarcane Mojito or the Vodka Shikanji and learn how to make them while availing of a 50 per cent discount too!

WEEKEND

Savour different varieties of melted cheese and chocolate at the Capiz Bar on Friday nights with Fondue, accompanied with live music from 7pm to midnight. Revel in a traditional wine and exotic cheese evening on Saturdays at The Verandah with a selected

list of wines and a cheese table curated by executive chef Mark Long from 7pm to 11:30pm. Sunday Brunches have never been more fun with five live food counters, unlimited beverages, lobsters and live music at The Dining Room. Enjoy your afternoon by the swimming pool, while your children spend the day at Camp Hyatt indulging in various craft activities. The Buffet Bruch starts at ₹1,800 for non-alcoholic beverages and ₹2,200 for selected alcoholic beverages from 1pm to 4pm.

For reservations, visit

www.goa.grand.hyatt.com or call on 0832 301 1234

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SIX RESTAURANTS— A WORLD OF CUISINES

The Dining Room: Indulge in multiple cuisines with five interactive kitchens, offering both; buffet and à la carte options. (Breakfast from 7am to 11am, Lunch from 1pm to 4pm and Dinner from 7pm to 11:30pm)

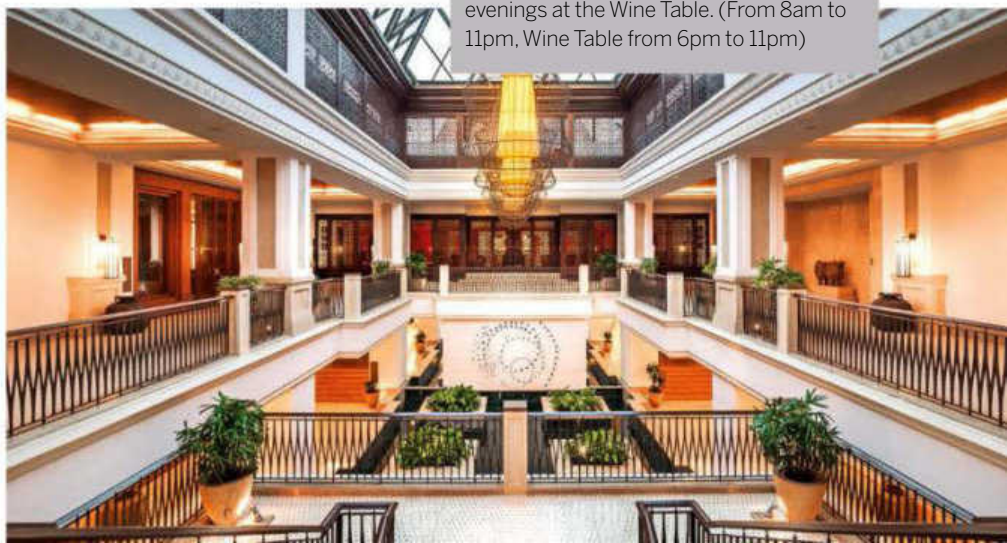
Chulha: With a live tandoor section and a chaat counter; savour all your Indian favourites. (From 7 pm to midnight)

The Verandah: A modern Australian restaurant, serving the best seafood & meat grills. Watch as the chefs prepare your meal. (From 7:00 pm to midnight)

Capiz Bar: Walk into the bar for live music, fondue, tapas and cocktails. (From 4pm onwards)

Confeitaria: Popular for high teas and 3D cakes the patisserie is ideal for a mid-day snack. (From 8am to 8pm)

Bay View Lounge: Meet up for high tea in the afternoons or for a glass of red in the evenings at the Wine Table. (From 8am to 11pm, Wine Table from 6pm to 11pm)



Agenda

treatments can be expensive, but for low-cost facial threading, head to **The Thread Bar** (www.thethreadbar.com) on Westwood Boulevard. **SUNAYANA KUMARI** is a former Condé Nast Traveller India features writer and a recent grad of the UCLA professional programme in screenwriting

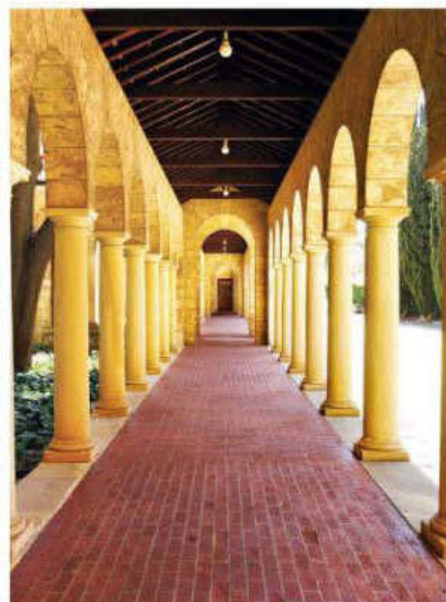
PERTH, AUSTRALIA

"Perth is the capital and largest city of Western Australia. It has several renowned universities, including the University of Western Australia and Edith Cowan University, both north of the Swan River, and Murdoch and Curtin Universities in its southern suburbs. Despite the city's expansive layout, travelling around is made easy, thanks to **Transperth** (www.transperth.wa.gov.au), which offers train and bus services. Buy a Student SmartRider card from the university office for a hefty discount on your commute.

If you've never lived alone before, you might want to spend the first semester on campus before renting out a house with friends. Each university is surrounded by affordable student housing, with fortnightly rents running from AU\$180 or ₹8,900.

Australia is famous for its golden beaches; do remember that summer stretches from December to February and winter, between June and August. Make sure you're carrying a light jacket when you land, and to pick up heavier winter gear, visit the **Westfield Carousel** shopping centre (www.westfield.com.au).

If academic life threatens to overwhelm you, hop on the public transport for a 20-minute journey to the seaside town of Fremantle, where an array of cafés, restaurants and bistros are sure to make you feel better. Visit **Little Creatures Brewery** (www.littlecreatures.com.au) and sample the in-house brews. Of course, you'll need to avoid being hungover for class, so soak up the booze with a wood-fired prosciutto and kale pizza, or a heaping of mussels in garlic sauce. If it's homey Indian fare you crave, head to **Annalakshmi** (www.annalakshmi.com.au) on the Swan for a vegetarian buffet. Happily for your pocket, it follows a 'pay as you feel' mantra. After you've eaten, stroll through Kings Park & Botanic Garden, which stretches across 400 hectares and displays over 3,000 species of flora unique to the state. It's also a great place to catch up on extra reading in peace and quiet. **MEHERWAN DADACHANJI** recently graduated from Murdoch University, Perth with a degree in public relations and media studies →



Sample the brews at Little Creatures Brewery and soak up the booze with some wood-fired pizza

Clockwise from top left: picnicking in Kings Park, Perth; a colonnade at the University of Western Australia; Winthrop Hall, one of the university's buildings; Little Creatures Brewery in Fremantle



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A café on the Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, behind the Duomo in Milan

MILAN, ITALY

"Moving to a city where people don't speak your language is challenging. Download the **Google Translate** app and if you haven't taken language classes before leaving, enrol at **Circolo Filologico Milanese** (www.filologico.it).

Right away, apply for your **Codice Fiscale** (personal tax code) and **Permesso di Soggiorno** (permit to stay).

Make sure you choose an English-speaking bank. **Banca Intesa San Paolo** (www.intesasanpaolo.com) has ATMs all over the city with no service charge. It's also a good idea to come with a pre-paid Forex card. For cell phone services, the **Wind** (www.wind.it) pre-paid sim card is easy to buy and manage. Sign up for a Call My Country plan, to make inexpensive calls to India.

Most universities offer residence, but there is also **AgenziaUni** (www.agenziauni.comune.milano.it), which helps students find independent housing and roommates. If you're looking to do up your pad, **IKEA** (www.ikea.com) is great, but also check out **Brera**, the design district or the **Navigli** market for vintage posters and records. Navigli also has affordable beauty salons.

Milan's metro system is easy to understand. Buy a monthly student pass if you plan to use it a lot. Since Milan is quite small, you could walk to most places, or use **public bicycles** (www.bikemi.com).

Your one-stop supermarket is **Esselunga** (www.esselunga.it). **Krishna Indian Bazaar** (+39 02 2024 0451), in Porta Venezia, is one of the city's few Indian grocers—stock up on your dals and spices. **Rangoli** (www.myristoranteindiano.it) and **Dawat** (+39 02 3453 7953) are two fairly good Indian restaurants that hit the spot when you're homesick." **RHEA KURUVILLA** is a fashion business student at Istituto Marangoni, Milano 📍

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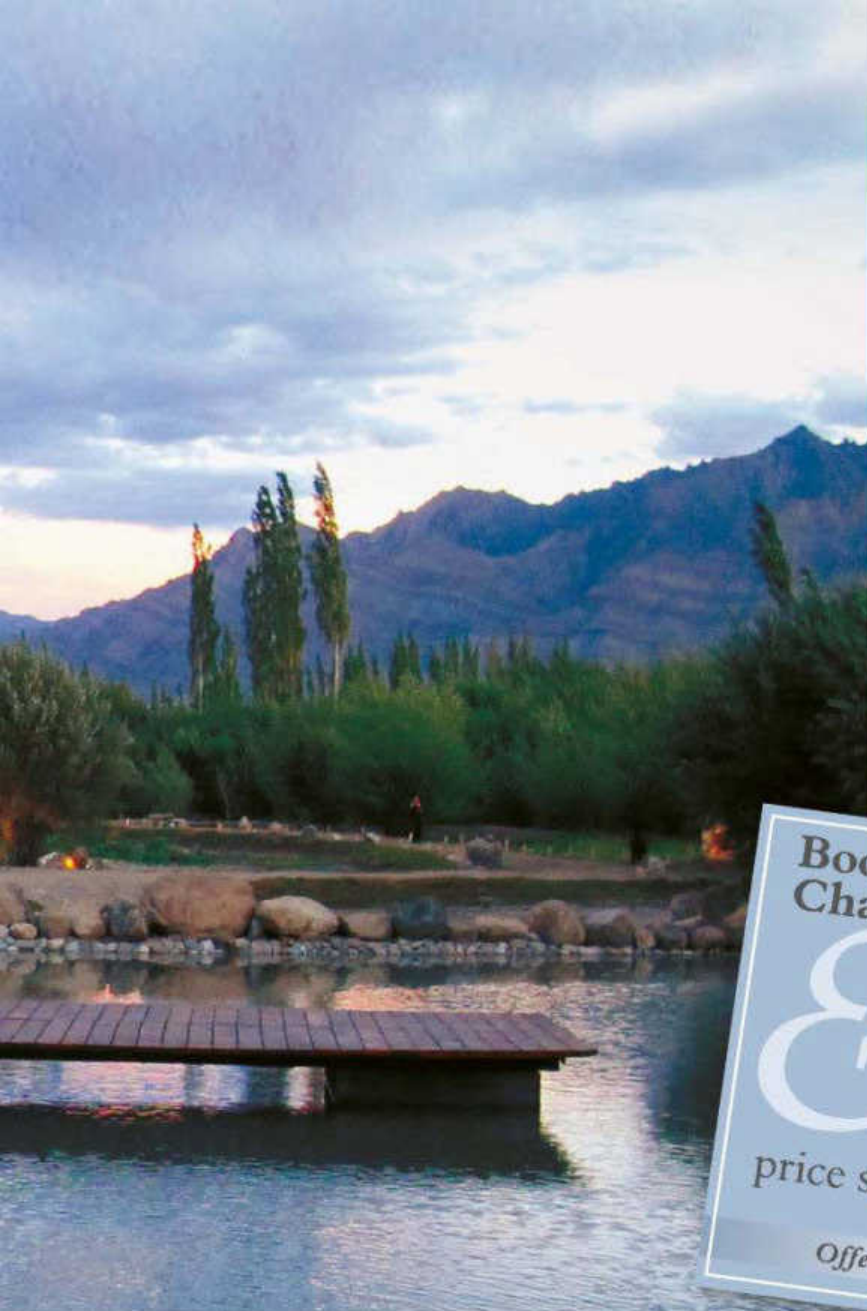
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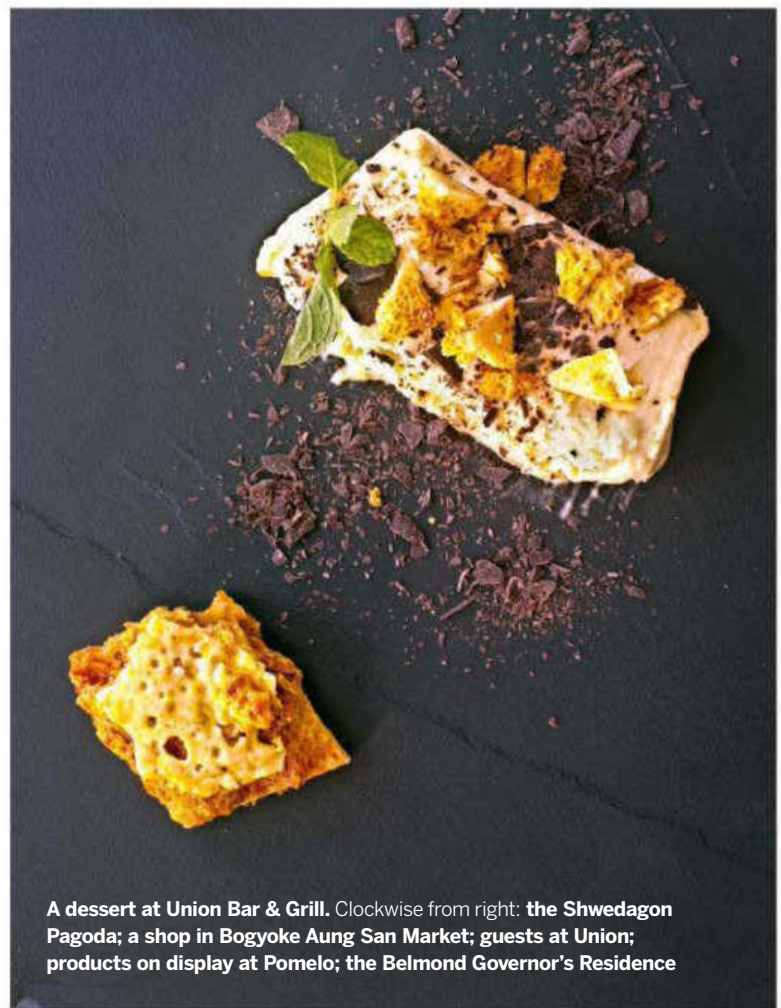


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A dessert at Union Bar & Grill. Clockwise from right: the Shwedagon Pagoda; a shop in Bogyoke Aung San Market; guests at Union; products on display at Pomelo; the Belmond Governor's Residence



Word of mouth

What's happening this month ★ New York ★ Nairobi



WHAT'S HOT IN YANGON

Laura Griffith-Jones hunts down the newest and most noteworthy contributors to Myanmar's capital city

SLEEP

- The city's hottest new boutique hideaway, **The Loft Hotel**, is ideally situated within walking distance of the gleaming golden Shwedagon Pagoda. Its 32 pared-back rooms and suites are cosy yet chic, with black-and-white photographs of Myanmar adorning red-brick walls. (www.theloftyangon.com; doubles from MMK2,06,690 or ₹11,750)
- **Belmond Governor's Residence** is Yangon's most famous hotel. It's an oasis just north of downtown with immaculate lawns, a lagoon-like swimming pool and a spa, which uses organic traditional ingredients. (www.belmond.com; doubles from MMK3,24,000 or ₹18,440)

EAT

- Buried behind a sea of street stalls, **Feel Myanmar Food** is a top lunch spot. Choose from an assortment of Burmese specialities—everything from succulent sticky pork chunks to prawns fried in tomatoes and chillis with steamed greens. (www.feelrestaurant.com)
- Everything about **House of Memories**, set in a charming mock-Tudor villa, is tasteful. At lunch it's an airy (for Yangon) terrace. Come nightfall, it becomes a moody, swinging den, with blues singing out on the grand piano. Must-try dishes include aubergine salad, beef with yoghurt and raisins and pumpkin curry. (www.houseofmemoriesmyanmar.com)
- **Shan Yoe Yar** may lack the atmosphere, but it serves hard-to-beat Shan delicacies in a 100-year-old house. Be sure you tuck into an oversized Mine Thauk aubergine curry. (+95 1 221 524)

DRINK

- Undoubtedly the best place to sip a cocktail or two is the rooftop **Vista Bar**, which has superlative views of the cityscape and the great Shwedagon Pagoda, stunningly illuminated at night. (+95 1 559 481)
- Another fail-safe establishment is **Union Bar & Grill** on the Strand, which serves an array of 'Stirred', 'Shaken' and 'Sparkling' cocktails. (<http://unionyangon.com>)
- The city's newest haunt is **The Blind Tiger**, a groovy, speakeasy-themed bar, where all the cool kids congregate when the evening closes in. (www.blindtiger-yangon.com)

SNACK

- Myanmar is famous for its atmospheric traditional tea shops. Of these, **Lucky Seven** is a relaxed downtown spot to taste mohinga (a traditional fish breakfast stew), kaw ye noodles, savoury buns, all washed down with a cup of steaming green tea. (49th Street)
- For a touch of glamour, try **Acacia Tea Salon**, a pâtisserie serving an array of decadent desserts. You could be in France, almost. (www.acaciateasalon.com)

SHOP

- You'll need at least a morning to do justice to the labyrinthine **Bogyoke Aung San Market**, a vast covered market selling everything from jewellery and fabrics to lacquerware and mother-of-pearl bowls. (www.bogyokeaungsanmarket.com)
- Make a difference when you shop at boutique store **Pomelo**, whose mission is to promote marginalised local producers. From glassware to papier mâché toys, something is bound to catch your eye. (www.pomeloyangon.com)



PHOTOGRAPHS: THOMAS JANZOW; ALEX TREADWAY; GALLERY STOCK; ALAMY



THE GOSS ON JAIPUR

Harish Kumar, of the new Zone By The Park hotel, on what he recommends you do in his city

What can guests do while avoiding the heat, given Jaipur's hot most of the time?

"The night walk at Amer Fort. Lit up with small yellow lights and without the crowds of tourists, it's easier to imagine what life was like for the original residents. You must end the walk with dinner at 1135 AD restaurant (www.mshospitality.in), at the fort—it's a truly royal experience. And there's always the evening sound and light show, in English and Hindi."

What is the best souvenir to bring back?

"Photographs by Tikam Chand, in front of Hawa Mahal. He uses a 150-year-old camera to take black-and-white photographs that are instantly developed, like a Polaroid. Everyone wants a picture taken, but these make it seem like they are from a different period in time."

Any great place to take kids?

"At Elefantasy, kids

can feed and pet an elephant. They can also wash one, learn how to cook rotis and using harmless colours make paintings on an elephant's face. Go on a safari at dusk, through the Nahargarh Biological Park, which has a rescue centre housing tigers and lions." (www.elefantasy.org)

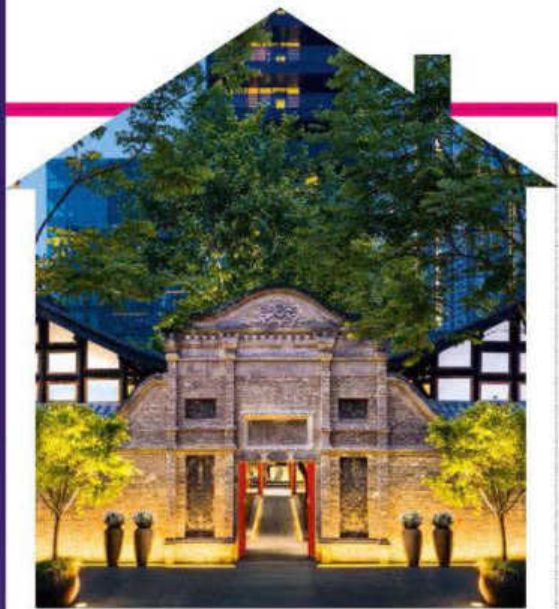
If you've had enough of the kachoris, kulfis and lassi, what else can visitors eat?

"Go to Tapri, for unexpected breakfast options like tofu bhurji. They also have a large selection of teas, which are served with frilly accompaniments like hourglasses. There's a particularly potent Red Bull Iced Tea." (www.tapri.net)

What is your insider's tip on Jaipur?

"Neerja International was started by a woman who was passionate about blue pottery. Now practised only in Turkey and India, this is a dying craft. Make sure you stop by their store for everything from knobs, plates and trays to some of the prettiest costume jewellery you'll find anywhere." (www.neerjainternational.com)

AYESHA ALEEM



THE TEMPLE HOUSE

CHENGDU One of China's most exciting new hotels, The Temple House, opened its doors this July in the hip south-western city of Chengdu—home of pandas, spicy Sichuanese food, and a thriving contemporary art scene. Set within a restored Qing dynasty courtyard, the 100-room offering is the third in Swire Hotels' House Collective and is a sister to Hong Kong's super-chic Upper House and the fashion-forward Opposite House in Beijing. The property, which also features serviced apartments, a spa and tea house, two restaurants and a bar, was designed by London-based Make Architects as part of a project to conserve the heritage sites around Chengdu's thousand-year-old Daci Temple. (www.thetemplehousehotel.com; doubles from RMB1,799 or ₹18,410)

SAMANTHA KUOK LEESE



Wah Taj!

"A wonder of the world becomes a coffee table with simple tinkering," says Job Smeets of Studio Job in Amsterdam. They've created this intricate, inverted replica of the Taj Mahal as a stunning, bronze coffee table. (www.studiojob.be; price on request)



TEXT: JASREEN MAYAL KHANNA PHOTOGRAPH: ALAMY

DOWNLOAD NOW Nightstay, a last-minute booking app that offers incredible discounts on luxury hotels across various Indian cities. (www.nightstay.in)



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Living on the edge

Offering a range of extreme sports, Maharashtra is the perfect destination for adventure seekers



Trekking in the Sahyadri Mountains

Widely known for its world heritage caves, bustling cities and numerous places of worship, Maharashtra is fast becoming a hub for adventure sports. From scuba diving to trekking, India's third largest state has something for every daredevil.

Warm waters, lush coral gardens and schools of fish await you at Tarkarli in the Sindhudurg district, the best place to *snorkel* or *scuba*

dive in Maharashtra. From November to May, head to this seaside village that offers dives for both beginners and experienced divers. Here, the MTDC Konkan Diving Dream's 22 local guides take you into the depths of the sea, while experienced PADI instructors conduct certification courses, ranging from basic to master levels.

For a more extreme water sport, head to the Kundalika River in Kolad, Maharashtra's premier *white*

water-rafting site. Located two hours away from Pune, the river is fed with excess water every morning from the dam, offering an ideal setting for rafting. Operational all year round, the Kundalika River has 10 rapids that range from Grade 2 to Grade 3. Starting at approximately 8am, travel 11km on the water for about one hour and forty-five minutes for an adrenaline rush. While in Kolad, also try out *kayaking* and *windsurfing*.

If you prefer not to get wet, hire

a boat and set *sail* on one of the many lakes in Maharashtra. In close proximity to Pune are the Pawna, Panshet, Mulshi and Khadakwasla lakes that are the most visited sites for sailing.

Water sports aren't the only extreme adventure activities that Maharashtra offers. Go *trekking* in the Sahyadri Mountain range—one of the best places to view biological diversity in the state. With breath taking views of the surrounding valleys, Bhandardara, in Ahmednagar district, is the best site to trek. See Ratangad and the Harishchandragad fort or follow the trails that lead to Ajoba and Ghanchakkar peaks. The adventurous can scale Mount Kalsubai, the highest peak in Maharashtra that stands at 5,400 ft. Other trekking options include the area around Rajmachi Fort, near Lonavala and the Waki Woods, which are 30km from Nagpur.

Alternatively, the hillside of the Karla caves, near Kamshet offers multiple *rock-climbing* routes. The hilly terrain and the rock cut caves serve as a challenging climb for even the most experienced climbers.

For a more relaxed experience, spend a night in the woods by

camping at one of the campsites that surround Mumbai and Pune. During the monsoons and winters, head to Khopoli, Kolad and Vasind that are easy to reach from Mumbai and Pune. Many tour companies organise activities like zip lining and kayaking around the camp grounds.

Take to the skies at the quaint hill station of Panchgani that offers paragliding excursions. Here you can enlist in a paragliding course and try flying on your own. Mahabaleshwar, Kamshet and Tapola are other alternatives that are easy to reach and offer paragliding.

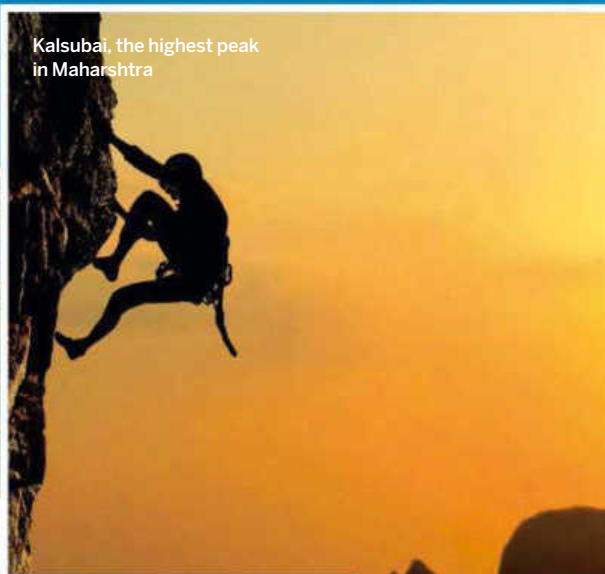
With a number of operators helping you plan your activities, Maharashtra serves as the perfect place for adventure.

For more information on the destinations and service providers, visit www.maharashtratourism.gov.in.



Paragliding at Kamshet

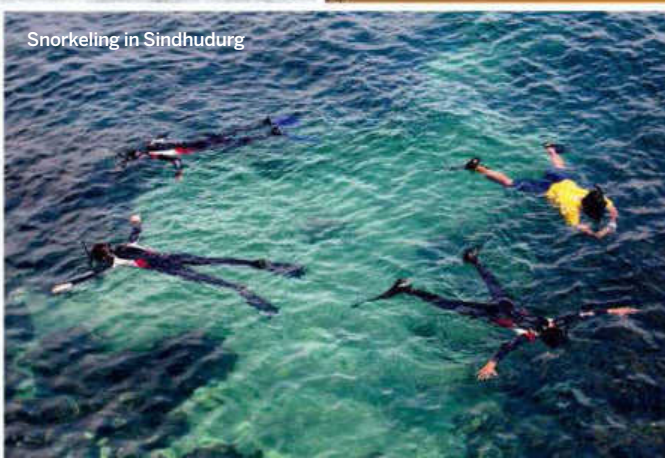
Kalsubai, the highest peak in Maharashtra



White water-rafting on the Kundalika River
(Image courtesy: www.kundalikarafting.in)



Snorkeling in Sindhudurg





FEASTING IN NAIROBI

With both local and global flavours on offer, Nairobi is proving to be a foodie paradise, says **Ramona Arena**

The Kenyan capital is one gastronomic destination that is seriously underestimated. If you are a meat lover, welcome to heaven. If not, don't worry, there's lots more on offer. Here's a quick round up of Nairobi's 5 must-visit restaurants to dine in.

THAI CHI

Located at the historic Sarova Stanley Hotel, where Ernest Hemingway spent a lot of time writing, this Thai restaurant is perfect for a business lunch or romantic dinner. It helps that kids under 12 are not welcome. (www.sarovahotels.com) **Order:** Gai gang kiew wan (green curry with chicken, coconut and Thai basil) and ped ob nam phueng (honey-glazed duck)



SEVEN GRILL AND LOUNGE

They only use local produce, meat and seafood, ageing their meats in an on-site meat room. (www.sevengrill.net) **Order:** Pan-fried buttered prawns, with basil and chilli, finished with spinach, Pernod and cream.



TALISMAN

Expect creative African-European-Asian fusion food at this quaint space, which is full of art. In the kitchen the focus is clearly on using cooking techniques that enhance the taste of

the ingredients used. (www.thetalismanrestaurant.com) **Order:** Feta and coriander samosas with chilli ginger jam and crackling braised pork belly with carrot puree.

TAMAMBO

Situated in the upscale district of Karen, you will often find local artists painting in the garden, local bands performing live and residents from the area sitting by the bar. There's also a cool shisha lounge. The menu has numerous options from African to Indian, Asian to European. I'd recommend this place for a long and lazy Sunday afternoon. (www.tamarind.co.ke) **Order:** Madagascar green peppercorn duckling flambéed with brandy.

CARAMEL RESTAURANT & LOUNGE

It has the reputation of being a place to be seen at and it is. The look is very chic and minimalist with warm hues of gold, cream and brown. The food, on the other hand, borders on the bourgeois. (caramelgroup.com) **Order:** TNT shrimp served with spicy Japanese mayo and the special Mac & Cheese with truffle oil and three cheese dipping sauce that takes three days to make.



OH THE PEOPLE YOU MEET (.COM)

watch New Yorker Michaela Guzy's fun videos on her adventures in Cape Town, Zimbabwe and Botswana. It's great for tips and insider intel!

NEW ANGAMA MARA

Kenya's having a tough time right now, but its fans are hardy sorts and nobody can deny that the Maasai Mara, a key site of the annual wildebeest migration, is one of Africa's greatest wildlife reserves. And now there's a new place to experience the region from: Angama Mara, on the Rift Valley's Olololo Escarpment minutes from the Mara Triangle and flanked by the kopje where Streep and Redford picnicked in *Out of Africa*. Refreshingly it's not only all wicker baskets and Stanley flasks; the vintage safari romance has been pared down as much as ramped up. Understated canvas tents, with startling Maasai-red furniture and textiles, have John Vogel-designed beds and great views through floor-to-ceiling glass windows. The first 15 (of 30) tents are open now. (www.angama.com; from £510 or \$15,060 per person) MICHELLE JANA CHAN



PHOTOGRAPH: SHUTTERSTOCK

One destination. Many temptations

Whether you want a boost of rejuvenation or simply escape for the weekend to unwind, check into **Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat & Spa** to achieve your wellness goals

Call it an urban haven, a spa lover's dream come true, a destination comparable to no other, Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat & Spa is a quick getaway from Mumbai and Pune. Need convincing? Here are at least six unvarnished truths that'll give you more than enough reason to pack your bags.

1

A picture-perfect monsoon

Don't let the clouds rain down on your parade. The monsoon season is when the Western Ghats truly come alive. They overflow with flora, fauna, falls and rivulets and the stunning landscape showcases a medley of colours transforming it into a beautiful canvas. Channel your inner-green warrior and take hikes along the private paths and slippery slopes shrouded by an abundant forest canopy. Just be sure to book your trip before the monsoon fades.

2

King size spa life

There are spas, and then there is Shillim Spa. It offers among the most comprehensive spa facilities in Asia. Spread over 70 acres with 17 treatment rooms offering up to 80 treatments. Located on the part of the estate that has the highest concentration of naturally occurring crystals, positive energy channels into those indulging in holistic therapies and wellness programmes.

3

Live in luxury

Sometimes the difference between a good trip and an amazing one comes down to one thing: the hotel stay. The 320-acre Shillim estate has 99 private villas and 15 include private pools. The Spa Pool villas finished in exposed stone have open-air private patios. Cool breeze and birdsong drift in from the outside and the sylvan setting makes it the perfect retreat to experience the countryside in style.

5

It's a wellness wonderland

Wellness takes on a whole new meaning here—from acupuncture and naturopathy to ayurveda treatments. There's also unique offerings like reiki, watsu sessions, a meditation cave, a yoga pavilion and even dance therapy. What's more, every wellness programme is curated to individual's needs, and these are available for a duration of 3 to 21 days. And natural herbs and plants grown around the retreat are used in these therapies. Choose as you please...

6

Dine with a view, always

Enjoy a cocktail or exotic herbal tea while watching the sun set over the Sahyadri Mountains. Or choose from unique culinary experiences—The Green Table for farm to table concept, Mountain Bar & Bistro for its views, Valley Bar for its range of culinary cocktails or Chef's Table for a private dining experience with live barbeque at the bank of a seasonal waterfall. The retreat's restaurants serve delectable Mediterranean and Asian fare, and most ingredients are sourced from local farms and the retreat's own organic vegetable garden.

4

Centre of attraction

The Western Ghats are a UNESCO World Heritage site and are charted as one of the world's eight hottest hotspots of biological diversity. Here you can truly escape from the world—visit the ancient Buddhist caves which are carved out of a mountain, explore the great Maratha fortresses and discover the natural beauty of the expansive Lake Pawna and its surroundings.





Thailand, Meet the Family

Thailand has always been a beloved hotspot for backpackers, bachelorettes and beach bums. But, (if you didn't already know) it's also home to some of the world's best family-fun activities

There's something here for all ages—the teenage rebel, the mid-aged curious Jane and Jack, even for the young couple with a toddler in tow. Simple pleasures, wild adventures, barefoot luxury, time out for the adults and plenty of fun for the kids. When in Thailand, family vacations become more than just reunions, they become epic memories that'll last a lifetime. Also—and this is key—you get fantastic group discounts when you travel in packs of six. Here's our pick of the best places to visit and things to do with the whole crew.

CHIANG MAI

Families who visit Thailand all beeline for Chiang Mai in the north—and with good reason. Start off with Chiang Mai's Bo Sang Handicraft village and watch local artisans

making the famous 'Sa' paper umbrellas. Visit Maesa Elephant Camp and enjoy the big-tusked elephants in show. The city's aquarium, zoo and night safari also offer a host of adventures. Then, leave the city and cruise through the cool waters of River Ping. Stop at a local farmer's house for some fresh lemon-grass juice. Or take a hike through the forest to the Wat Palad temple complex where the lush foliage and bejewelled Buddhas will awake all the senses.

PATTAYA

The seaside city of Pattaya has become the Disneyworld of Thailand—from the Teddy Bear Museum to the Cartoon Network Theme park where kids can hang out with Ben 10, The Powerpuff Girls and all their Cartoon Network friends. The Pipo Pony Club is another

fabulous attraction for horse-lovers. Don't miss swinging down South East Asia's longest zip line when you visit Flight of Gibbon, and to experience the rich variety of marine life found in Pattaya, make a trip to the city's famous Underwater World.

BANGKOK

You can't come to Thailand and skip its capital city. Besides its Michelin-star restaurants and gigantic shopping malls, it's got enough to keep the kids busy too. Check out cool installations at Art in Paradise 3D Museum or explore the enchanting sea life at Ocean World. Then for the ultimate adrenalin-rush, aboard Space Mountain, Asia's very first hanging roller coaster at Dream World or try the thrill-filled rides at Siam Park City. For great shopping and dining options, and



a chance to ride the highest Ferris wheel in Thailand, Asiatique, the Riverfront promises a great time.

HUA HIN

This seaside destination is Thailand's instant remedy for every conceivable stress or boredom. For kids, there's a bounty of options like water sports at Vana Nava Water Park, horseback rides on the beach and camel-inspired rides at Camel Republic ensuring that this holiday break will be one they won't forget too soon. For the folks, world class 18-hole golf courses, romantic walks on powder-white sand beaches, expansive vineyards, candle-lit dinners, shopping at the coolest flea markets around and soothing spa-time are on the cards.

PHUKET

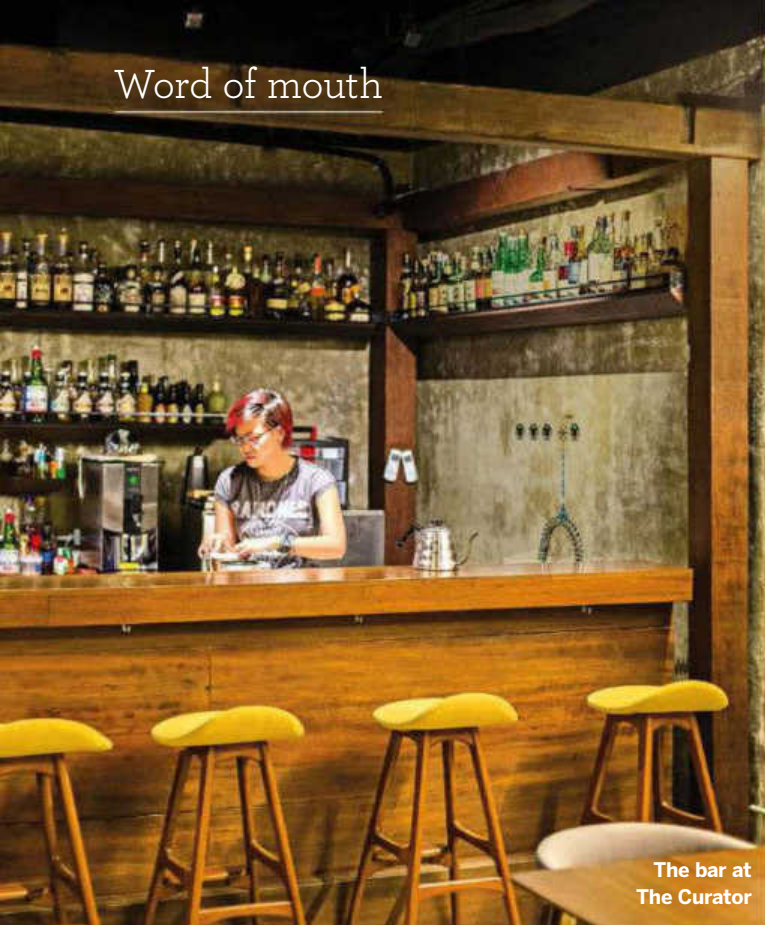
Phuket needs no introduction—beautiful beaches, stunning islands, delectable sea food, great shopping and amazing attractions.

Don't miss the ultimate night-time cultural theme park inspired by Thailand's exotic heritage, Phuket Fantasea. Or go to Splash Jungle Water Park for a wet-and-wild day out. Take a day trip to Phi Phi Islands and dive, snorkel, cliff-jump or just chill on the beach. As for James Bond fans, a tour around Phang Nga Bay, where the famous 1974 flick, *The Man with the Golden Gun* was shot is a must. But don't leave Phuket without taking a helicopter ride around the stunning island.

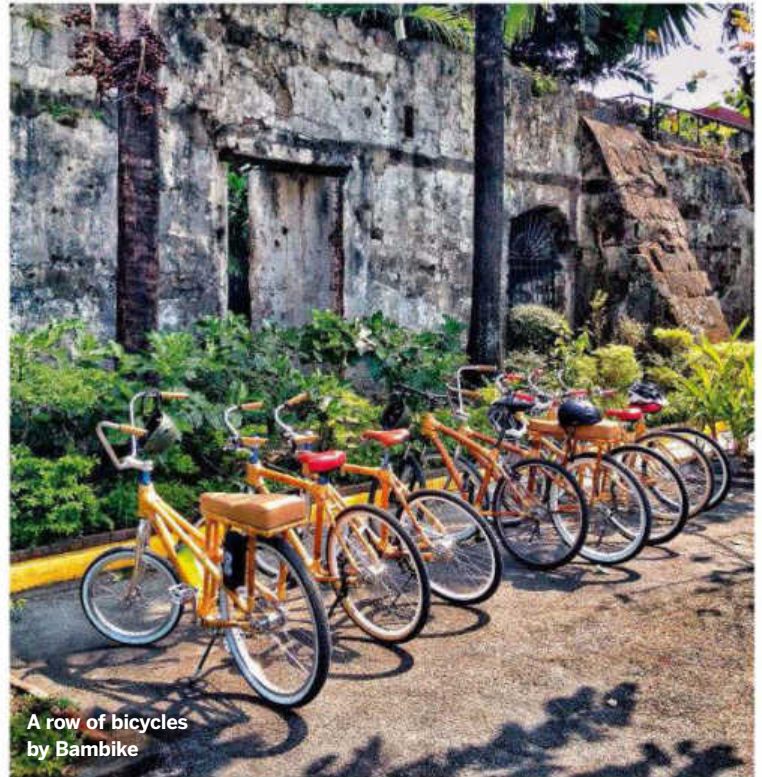
Mark your calendars for the next big break and plan a brilliant family holiday to Thailand. After all, a family that holidays together stays together!

For more information:
 visit www.tourismthailand.org
[Twitter.com/thaiamazesyou](https://twitter.com/thaiamazesyou)
[Facebook.com/TourismAuthorityofThailandIndia](https://facebook.com/TourismAuthorityofThailandIndia)
[Facebook.com/ tat.mumbai](https://facebook.com/tat.mumbai)

Word of mouth



The bar at
The Curator



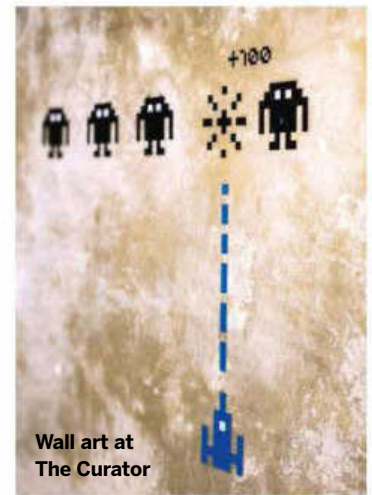
A row of bicycles
by Bambike



A piece by theatre
artist Daniel Darwin,
who performed at
Fringe Manila in 2015



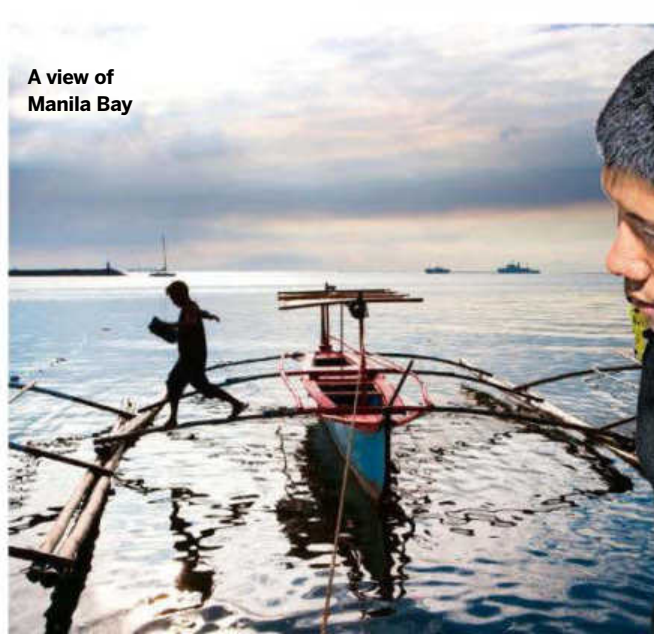
Coffee at The
Four Strings



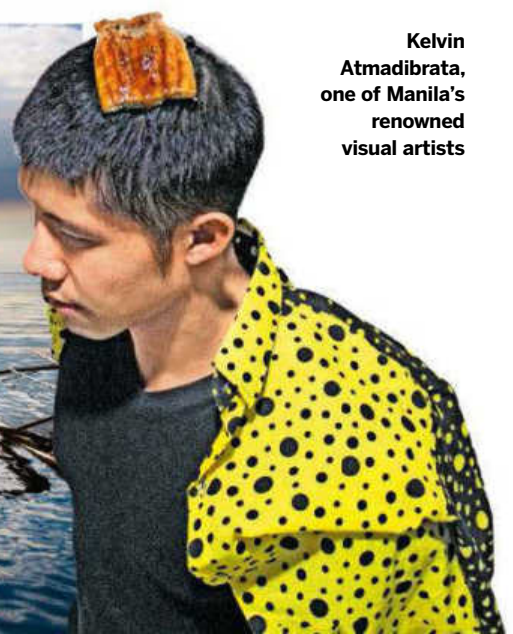
Wall art at
The Curator



Luneta Hotel



A view of
Manila Bay



Kelvin
Atmadibrata,
one of Manila's
renowned
visual artists

ZONED IN: MANILA

The Philippines' capital is an Asian megacity with a historic Spanish walled town at its heart; it is chaotic and seedy in parts, but steeped in old-world glamour. **Isobel Diamond** tells you what not to miss



The Four Strings



A gilded chair in the lobby of Luneta Hotel

THE CULTURE

To understand the city's thriving art scene, head to **1335 Mabini** (www.1335mabini.com). This new art space, located in a restored colonial townhouse, hosts exhibitions by emerging local artists as well as contemporary names from around the world. From 10–28 February 2016, a new arts festival, **Fringe Manila** (www.fringemanila.com), will showcase groundbreaking musical, theatrical and dance performances, as well as exhibitions, across the city.

THE FOOD

Brooklyn diner **Purple Yam** (+63 2 523 3497) has set up shop in the owner's ancestral home in Malate. Enjoy a modern twist on Filipino classics, such as lechon kawali (deep-fried pork belly served with pickled papaya.)

THE DRINKS

The backstreets of Makati conceal a handful of speakeasy-style bars. **Finders Keepers**, hidden behind Joe's Meat Shack diner in Warehouse 5, has no signboard or light at its entrance. But behind the rusting steel door flanked by inconspicuous bouncers, you'll find a dressed-down crowd enjoying expertly crafted cocktails and beats. **The Curator** (www.thecurator.com.ph) is a coffee shop by day and cocktail den by night, where mixologists whip up concoctions like Blood and Sand, a heady combo of cherry liqueur, sweet vermouth and Scotch. And behind a secret door at **Bugsy's Bar and Bistro** (www.bugsys.com.ph) in Salcedo, **Red Rabbit** is a glamorous drinking haven with 1920s décor.




A display at Heima

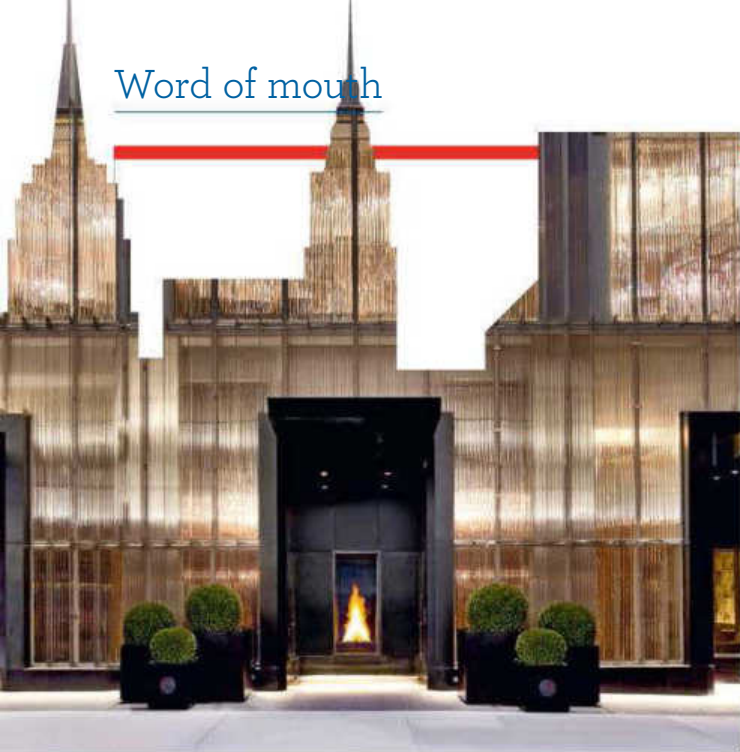
THE HOTELS

Malate's faded architecture and boho spirit were the inspiration for two recent openings in the neighbourhood. **Luneta Hotel** (www.lunetahotel.com; doubles from PHP4,400 or ₱6,300), built in Belle Époque style during the pre-World War II boom, had closed after years in decline. Now, following a restoration, it's an exquisite hark back to 1918—the year it originally opened. **Amelie Hotel Manila** (www.ameliehotelmanila.com; doubles from PHP4,200 or ₱6,000) fuses modern and Art Deco-inspired interiors. Plans are afoot to bring music and art by locals to the hotel's public spaces. **THE TOUR** Explore the old walled city of Intramuros on bamboo bicycles by **Bambike** (www.bambike.com). These stylish and

sustainable rides are handmade by craftsmen who work with a community charity.

THE SHOPS

Quezon City's vintage arcade, Cubao Expo, is a hotbed for home-grown designers. **Coast Thru Life** (33 Cubao Expo) has everything you'd need for a weekend on the waves—boardies, boards, t-shirts and more, while **The Four Strings** (+63 925 858 5353) is a musicians' hangout that sells hand-painted ukuleles. Over in Makati, **LRI Design Plaza** (www.lridesignplaza.com) has a cluster of chic design stores; check out **Heima** (www.heimastore.com), co-created by leading Manila interior designer Rossy Yabut-Rojales. It sells international brands alongside her own colourful range. Stock up on some great art books and vinyl records, too. 



NEW IN NEW YORK

What Manhattan's talking about: museums, bars, crystal and kulfi

SEE

Whitney Museum of American Art: A famous address for contemporary art is now a work of art, too. First Lady Michelle Obama inaugurated this steel-and-glass behemoth designed by Pritzker Prize winning architect Renzo Piano, the genius behind London's The Shard. (www.whitney.org)

DRINK

The Polo Bar: New York native Ralph Lauren's first restaurant in his hometown was the absolute hotspot during NY Fashion Week. Have your concierge get you in, so you can people-watch as you sip cocktails. Just remember, these aren't ordinary people; they're some of Manhattan's prettiest and most glamorous, so dress the part. (www.ralphlauren.com)



STAY

Baccarat Hotel: There once was a time fancy hotels were minimally designed, as if less was more. That time is over, at least according to Midtown's new Baccarat Hotel. It's plush, textured, and outfitted with sparkling chandeliers of the French crystal company that give the hotel its name. (www.baccarathotels.com)

EAT

Babu Ji: Jessi and Jennifer Singh's quirky Indian restaurants in Melbourne were hits; now they're getting people in Manhattan talking about Babu Ji, which serves samosa burgers, chaat, and a hit version of honey-cardamom-pistachio kulfi. (www.babujinyc.com)



BEACH BUM ALERT

Tips to get you ready for a sun-n-sand vacation

Hair: Leave the blow dryer at home and embrace your waves. John Frieda (www.johnfrieda.com) has brought back its 90s cult product Beach Blonde Sea Waves Sea Salt Spray (US\$10 or ₹635 for 148ml) which suits brunettes just as well.

Body: Yogalates is the hot fitness trend that combines yoga with Pilates. Revolution studio (www.revolutioncycle.in) offers classes in Mumbai; sign up to score your dream bikini bod.

Tech: MUJI (www.muji.eu), the Japanese anti-brand brand, is slated to launch in India early next year and we recommend you get your hands on their water and sunscreen proof smartphone case (£12.95 or ₹1,300) as soon as doors open.

Drink: Love Diet Coke but hate artificial sweeteners? Coca-Cola has recently launched Coke Life sweetened with stevia leaf. So if you're in Argentina, Chile or even Britain, try out this healthier version instead.

Remedy: Sunburn cramping your style? Aloe vera ice cubes are the ultimate #beachhack. Just pour aloe vera gel into a clean ice tray, freeze for an hour. Voila, they're ready to use!

Decorator's Notebook is a new e-store curated by Priti Devi, showcasing home accessories by artisans from across the globe. (www.decoratorsnotebook.co)



TEXT: AVESHA ALEEM, JASREEN MAYAL KHANNA
PHOTOGRAPHS: KARIN JOBST, DAVE KENNEDY/GALLERY STOCK

A photograph of four people (three men and one woman) in a sophisticated living room. They are gathered around a dark wooden table, engaged in conversation and holding glasses of wine. The room features ornate, carved stone pillars and a warm, ambient light. The overall mood is elegant and social.

The Living Rooms at The Mansion. Opening Soon.

For more information, please feel free
to reach the host at The Mansion on
+ 91 11 6677 1450

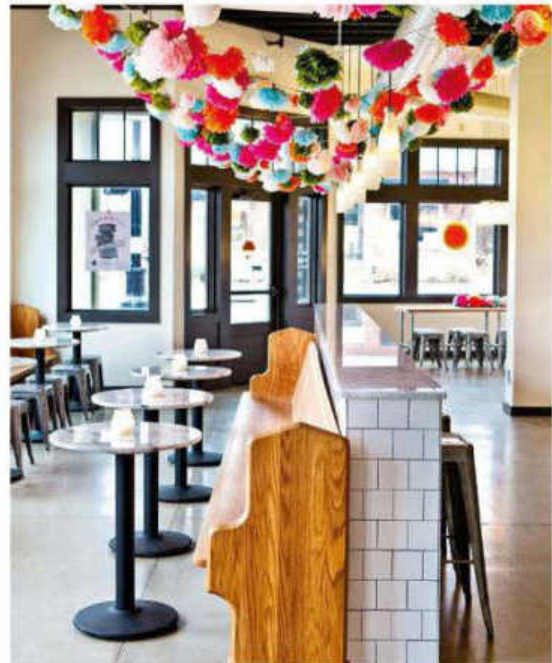


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Word of mouth





Top row from left: the nostalgic vibe of **The Ice Cream Bar in San Francisco** extends to the menu too, with classic flavours and ice-cream floats; in **Girona, Spain, Rocambolesc** is the ice cream fantasy of Jordi Roca, the pastry chef at three-Michelin-starred El Celler de Can Roca; **Eisdieler in Linz, Austria** dishes up some delicious organic flavours, like vegan lavender; **Vienna's Eis Greissler** uses milk from its 35 organic cows to produce creamy gelato; sundaes range from Knickerbocker Glory to chocolate topped with gold leaf and caviar at **The Parlour at Fortnum & Mason in London**



ICE CREAM

Fiona Kerr gives you the scoop on the coolest spots, from Tel Aviv to Beverly Hills

Middle row from left: At its **Beverly Hills shop, American cupcake king Sprinkles** turns its skills to ice cream with red-velvet cones; **Snow Picnic, in Nakano, Tokyo**, has a whimsical pastel scheme that belies its preparation methods using liquid nitrogen; **Ruby Violet in London's Kentish Town** makes sorbet blooms with rosewater and prosecco; in **Hua Hin, Thailand, Once Upon A Cream** serves classic flavours like chocolate chip; the salted caramel ice cream with nut brittle at **Ruby Violet**



Bottom row from left: gelateria **Leggenda's Jaffa Port branch in Tel Aviv** shows its industrial roots in exposed ventilation shafts and a huge concrete bar, but the flavours are colourful and creative, including elderberry and white chocolate-orange; traditional flavours get a surprising twist (Szechuan-peppercorn chocolate, banana curry) at **Morgenstern's Finest Ice Cream in New York**; the bright paper pom-poms look like curls of soft-scoop at **Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams in Columbus, Ohio**, which serves flavours like root beer and brown butter almond brittle; in Spain, **Rocambolesc's** candy-striped interiors are the backdrop to six rotating flavours and more than 30 madcap toppings

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Where to stay

Our picks in ★ Tirupati ★ Bhutan ★ Mexico

JW MARRIOTT VENICE RESORT & SPA

The floating city's new luxe property is shaking up the way we experience this much adored but overcrowded tourist hotspot, says **Michelle Jana Chan**.

Photographs by **Lydia Evans**

Where to stay

GOOD FOR WEDDINGS


I am lying on a sunbed by a rooftop infinity pool. A gull soars overhead, its wings spanning the sky. Down below, mahogany motoscafi, the city's glamorous water-taxis, glide past fishing boats, a flotilla of sailing boats, kayaks. In the misty distance are the towers and domes of the city and in the other direction, the Adriatic Sea.

The tiny archipelago that is Venice is embraced by an unstirring inland sea protected by the natural defences of long, narrow island barriers. One of the larger islands, Isola delle Rose, is made from sand and soil dug out during the construction of the city's commercial port. On it was built a hospital that shut down in the 1970s and lay abandoned for decades. That is, until now.

Its latest incarnation is as a classy JW Marriott hotel, a process helmed by Milan-based Matteo Thun & Partners. Spaces are lustrous and bright with unfiltered Mediterranean light; the interiors are refreshingly contemporary for Venice, which is still obsessed with velvet, gilt and brocade. Up on the fourth floor is the ravishing rooftop bar and pool (one of very few in the city, which makes this hotel doubly special), where I stay as long as I can get away with it.

On 16 hectares of landscaped grounds, the hospital's former warehouses, workshops and woodsheds have been transformed into big rooms with private pools, gardens and terraces. Gorgeous parquet floors and luxuriant furnishings abound, including rather too many cushions. The most coveted rooms overlook the lagoon or the 1,000-year-old olive groves or the soaring neo-Romanesque Catholic church.

There are three pools, a kids' club, a banquet room that fits almost 400 guests, water sports, volleyball on the lawns and four restaurants, including one by Michelin-starred chef Giancarlo Perbellini. And the supersized spa—probably bigger than some hotels in Venice—uses the revered QMS products.

But these are frills. The hotel is about the location, space, light and air. Above all, it's about a new way to experience Venice. 

JW MARRIOTT VENICE RESORT & SPA

Isola delle Rose, Laguna di San Marco
(www.marriott.com; doubles from €325 or ₹23,600)

GETTING THERE

Fly to Venice with Turkish Airlines (www.turkishairlines.com). Stopover in Istanbul or Qatar Airways (www.qatarairways.com). Stopover in Doha) from Mumbai or New Delhi.



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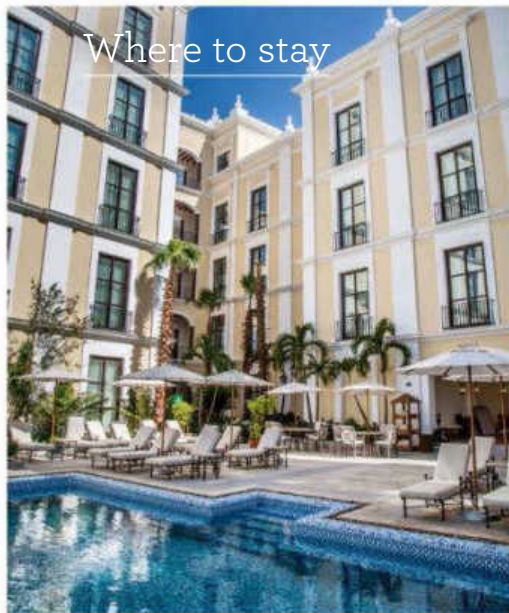
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Where to stay



★ CNT EXCLUSIVE ★

HOTEL SOLAR DE LAS ÁNIMAS

MEXICO Tequila (the town, not the drink) has a new luxury hotel, and it's the perfect base to enjoy tequila (the drink, not the town).

By **Prasad Ramamurthy**



As you exit the airport and turn left, away from Guadalajara city, you might think you're tripping on something. The plants around you, as far as the eye can see, appear to be blue. Fear not. You're not in a radioactive wasteland, but in tequila country, heading to the very place that gave the drink its name.


The town of Tequila and the areas surrounding it, in the Jalisco region of Mexico, are home to the blue agave plant, which is the source of the alcohol. Adding to the push to drive tourism in this region, José Cuervo, the world's biggest producer of tequila, has opened a new 93-room property, including 12 suites, right in the centre of the town.

The hotel's architecture is partly inspired by 17th- and 18th-century Mexican Creole mansions. All rooms have high-speed Internet access, smart TVs that talk to your mobile and tablet devices, beds with

Egyptian cotton sheets, bathrooms with L'OCCITANE products and well-stocked maxi bars (Master Suites come with wine cabinets). Pick a room with a view of the imposing volcano nearby, the 18th-century town church or the hotel's gardens, and then explore the property and surrounding areas.

Grab a bottle, lounge by the pool and thank your stars the conquistadors got something right

You could saddle up and go riding in the agave fields, or drive to the breweries, such as La Rojeña, the oldest in all of the Americas, and see for yourself how the heart of the blue agave plant (which looks every bit like an obese pineapple), is turned into your favourite shot. You can also explore the

prehistoric Guachimontones pyramids, an hour's drive away, or play golf at the 18-hole course designed by Jack Nicklaus at El Rio Country Club. Come back to the hotel and enjoy local favourites and Mexican haute cuisine at the in-house restaurant. Or just grab a bottle, chill on a sunlounger by the rooftop plunge pool and thank your stars the conquistadors got something right. 

HOTEL SOLAR DE LAS ÁNIMAS

Calle Ramón Corona, 86 Colonia Centro, Tequila (www.hotelsoldelasanimas.com; doubles from MEX\$2,600 or ₹10,850)

GETTING THERE

Fly to Guadalajara with United Airlines (www.united.com. Stopovers in Newark and Houston) or Delta (www.delta.com. Stopovers in Paris and Atlanta) from Mumbai or New Delhi.

WHEN TO GO

December–April, when it's cooler and there's no threat of hurricanes



LET THE LAND OF GOLD LEAD YOU TO HIDDEN TREASURES

Let Queenstown's stunning vistas work their magic on you. Hike through Mount Aspiring National Park to witness the Southern Alps in all their pristine glory. For a more leisurely stroll, head for the serene shores of Lake Wakatipu. You can even plan a treasure hunt to Arrowtown - a quaint historic settlement by the Arrow River which bears gold even today. Afterwards, spend time exploring the city's dynamic culinary scene. Come, experience something new around every corner.

**EVERY DAY A
DIFFERENT
JOURNEY**

Where to stay



★ CNT EXCLUSIVE ★



LE MÉRIDIDIEN THIMPHU

BHUTAN The capital's new opening is all about modern comforts, reports **Jasreen Mayal Khanna**

In a country that mandates all its structures to be built with traditional Bhutanese-style roofs and windows, the contemporary aesthetic of Le Méridien, Thimphu is refreshing. The sleek new design hotel has a simple white exterior with Buddhist mantras painted on the foyer ceiling. This modern-meets-traditional design philosophy is seen across the common areas and living spaces. The lobby has structural furniture and a prayer-flag-inspired installation, while the rooms have striking glass lamps, graphic rugs and a saffron panel mounted with ceramic Bhutanese symbols. If you're in the mood to splurge, stay on the top floor, which is dedicated to suites and has its own club lounge.

The breakfast spread is great, including local, Indian and continental options, and even a live dosa and crepe counter. Sese Shamu, the pan-Asian restaurant is named after the rare golden mushrooms found in Bhutan; they were out of season when I visited, so I had the signature prawns with



“The lobby has structural furniture, modern lamps and a prayer-flag-inspired installation,”

shichimi togarashi (spices) and scallions, which were delicious.

In the centre of the city, the hotel is close to a number of cafés and the main shopping street, yet only a 15-minute drive from the mountains. On Friday evenings, a local rock band plays at the in-house bar. And right by the hotel is VAST Bhutan, a reputed gallery showcasing cool works by local artists (it is the hotel's art partner, so your room key cards also give you access to the gallery).

With so much to offer, plus visas on arrival, do you really need more reasons to visit? 🇧🇹

LE MÉRIDIDIEN THIMPHU

Chorten lam PO Box 01286, Thimphu
(www.starwoodhotels.com; doubles from US\$255 or ₹14,300)

GETTING THERE

Fly to Paro with Druk Air (www.drukair.com.bt) from Mumbai or New Delhi. Thimphu is an hour's drive from there.

WHEN TO GO

Autumn (September–November) and spring (March–May)

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Where to stay

ARGOS IN CAPPADOCIA, TURKEY

"Built on the site of an ancient monastery in Uchisar, Argos has retained the old structures while pampering you with modern amenities. The restaurant, SEKI, is amazing, particularly the breakfast spread of honeycomb, dry fruit and local cheeses. There's also a very impressive wine cellar." (www.argosincappadocia.com; doubles from €215 or ₹15,300)



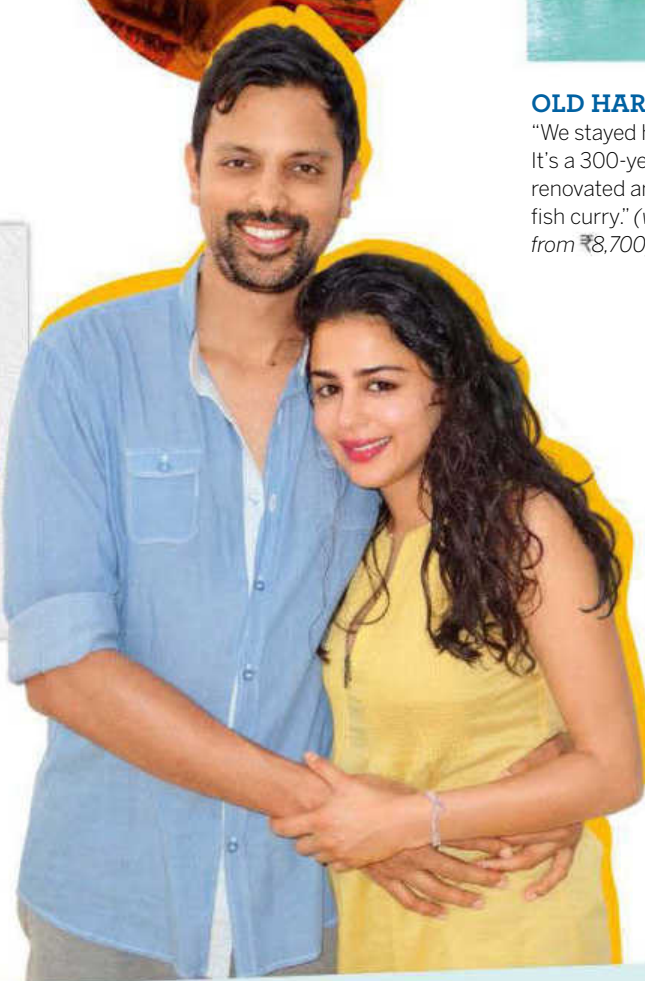
OLD HARBOUR HOTEL, KOCHI

"We stayed here when we attended the Biennale. It's a 300-year-old villa that's been painstakingly renovated and has some great food—we loved the fish curry." (www.oldharbourhotel.com; doubles from ₹8,700)



&BEYOND MNEMBA ISLAND LODGE, ZANZIBAR

"We took off our shoes when we reached and wore them again only when we were leaving. There's incredible snorkelling and diving; we even saw turtles hatching while drinking our evening cocktails." (www.andbeyond.com; doubles from ZAR18,884 or ₹98,740)



SEXTANTIO LE GROTTA DELLA CIVITA, MATERA, ITALY

"The rugged Italian town is known for its ancient caves, and the rooms are actual caves. They're sparsely furnished, but with gorgeous Italian bath fittings." (www.sextantio.it; doubles from €350 or ₹24,430)

Bed-hopping with Mukul Deora & Nitasha Thapar

HOTEL CONFIDENTIAL The newlywed DJ and film producer and his graphic designer wife tell Jasreen Mayal Khanna where they love to stay

INN ON FERRY STREET, DETROIT

"The hotel consists of restored Victorian homes and carriage houses. Each building and room is different yet very cosy and comfortable. You feel like you're in a different era in a very industrial city." (www.innonferrystreet.com; doubles from US\$149 or ₹9,500)



While relaxing over cocktails at the &Beyond Mnemba Island Lodge, we saw turtles hatching

PET PEEVE "In this day and age, to have to pay for wi-fi seems outdated. It has become a necessity now."

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Tirupati

ROOM SERVICE Priyanka Agarwal picks the best hotels to check in to, whether you're seeking blessings or a business deal



	Resort	Luxury	Business	Good value
	MARASA SAROVAR PREMIERE	FORTUNE SELECT GRAND RIDGE	MINERVA GRAND	KEYS HOTEL VIHAS
Location	Away from the town centre, 18km from the airport and 24km from the temple	Near the art and craft village of Shilparamam, 25km from the temple	Close to the offices of major infrastructure and manufacturing companies Lanco and Grindwell Norton	The closest hotel to the temple; it is about 40 minutes away by road
Look	The theme is the 10 avatars of Vishnu, complete with a restaurant named Krishna, decorated with flutes	White and brown, with pops of colour and glitzy lights. There's also a bookstore and art exhibition space	It's your standard small-town hotel—plain on the outside and comfortable inside	Channels South India's love for gold, from the bright lighting to the lampshades and headboards
Crowd	Visitors looking for some R&R during their pilgrimage	N Chandrababu Naidu and Shruti Haasan have stayed here	Business travellers and the odd celebrity such as actor Nagarjuna	Devotees looking for a convenient stay close to the temple
Rooms	115 rooms and six suites with geometric patterns on the walls and hurricane lamps	Featuring a contemporary look, the 133 rooms and five suites come with free wi-fi	66 rooms and three suites with oakwood floors and free wi-fi	58 rooms and three suites with 24-hour room service—great for a coffee before your pre-dawn darshan
Eating & drinking	The all-day Lotus Café is good for pan-Asian meals, while Krishna serves vegetarian Indian fare	Zodiac and Rainbow offer Indian, European and Chinese; the latter is vegetarian	Minerva Coffee Shop does a good Andhra vegetarian thali; BlueFox is a decent multi-cuisine option	Nine Flavours serves Indian, European and Chinese food
Best thing	Views of the Tirumala Hills from some of the Premiere Rooms	Its infinity pool, the only such hotel pool in Tirupati	The tasty Andhra thalis at Minerva Coffee Shop	A beauty kit for female guests, with pins, kumkum and nail polish remover
Worst thing	The secluded approach can feel a bit daunting after dark	The views of nearby buildings are nothing to write home about	Opaque glass in the rooms keeps out dust and heat, but this means no views at all	No alcohol, owing to its proximity to the temple
Price	Doubles from ₹3,000	Doubles from ₹4,200	Doubles from ₹3,600	Doubles from ₹3,000
Contact	Upadhyaya Nagar, Karakambadi Road (www.sarovarhotels.com)	Shilparamam, Tiruchanoor Road (www.fortunehotels.in)	19-3-39, Renigunta Road (www.minervahotels.in)	Madura Nagar (www.keyshotels.com)

MUST DO

The early morning Suprabhat darshan, when idols of the deities are bathed and dressed for the day. Limited spots are available, so book a few days in advance (www.ttdsevaonline.com)

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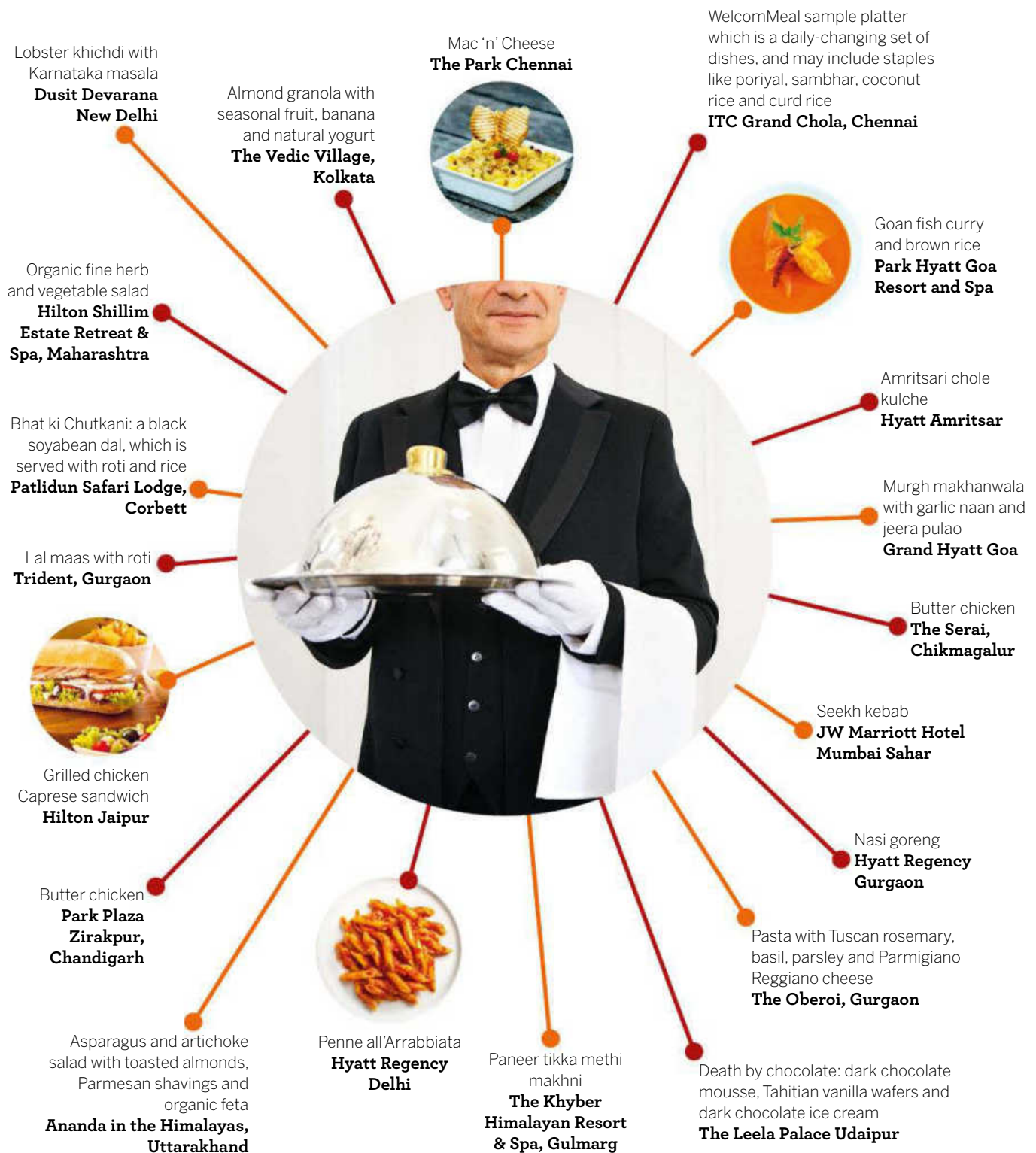
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HELLO! ROOM SERVICE

From the humble butter chicken to a deconstructed chocolate dessert, here are the most ordered dishes at hotels across the country



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Why we travel ★ Drinking in Tokyo ★ Eating around the world

IN THE CRADLE OF SCENT

Few things over the ages have signified luxury as powerfully as perfume. **Susan Hack** follows her nose to where it all began—the fragrance-obsessed Sultanate of Oman.

Photographs by **Giles Revell**

I'm on a scent-smelling trip to Salalah, an Arabian seaport in Oman's southwest governorate of Dhofar—the humid heart of the 6,000-year-old frankincense trade. Friends in the capital, Muscat, swear Dhofar is the source not only of the world's best frankincense, but also of the Arab world's finest bakhoor—incense hand-blended from resins, powdered flowers, perfumed oils, ground seashells and other aromatics. Sold by female artisans from their homes, through women's associations, in souks and at weekly markets, bakhoor is used to welcome guests, ward off bad luck, and obfuscate cooking smells. Most importantly, it is part of how Omanis express themselves, mixing and matching scents. "From childhood, Omanis learn to layer fragrance like artists building up colour in a painting," Marcia Dorr, a Muscat-based author of several books on Omani heritage, explained. "Women line clothes drawers with fresh jasmine and myrtle, apply scented oils and pastes to their body and spray perfumes on incense-infused headscarves and abayas."

At 9pm, I set off from my Salalah hotel seeking an Omani fragrance makeover. In Salalah's central district of

low cream-coloured modern buildings, I ask for directions to the small shop owned by Laila Al Baraka, a local scent guru.

Three men stand at her counter, buying gifts for their families. She indicates that I should take a seat.

Al Baraka makes bakhoors along with perfumed hair oils and skin unguents. I ask if, like some Western perfume creators, she has a story or a person in mind when designing a scent. She replies that Omanis already know what they like and don't like; many buy pure ingredients and make their own bakhoor at home. Her advice is almost pharmaceutical. Musk binds perfumed oils to fragrant wood. Sandalwood powder helps smoke cling to your clothes. Ground cardamom pods serve as the burning agent for clients who can't afford expensive ingredients.

I tell her I'd like a bakhoor to take back for my asthmatic husband. When she hears that we are both bakhoor virgins, she reaches for one of her bestsellers. Handwritten on masking tape, the Arabic label translates to "Wood Function."

The name, it turns out, refers only to the product's base: slow-burning pieces of high-quality oud. Oud is the Arabic

term for the fragrant ebony-coloured resin secreted in reaction to an invasive fungus by the heartwood of *Aquilaria malaccensis*, an Asian evergreen tree. Wild oud is now exceedingly rare and can cost tens of thousands of dollars per pound. A thumb-size fragment will burn for hours, releasing a sweet, earthy aroma. The scent of Wood Function in the jar is heavy, dense, and tinged with rose oil. For the full effect, Al Baraka advises, I should light it up precisely two hours before my beloved comes home from work. She turns to pluck something from a shelf of glittering jars and bottles. Rubbed on the skin, she says, this perfume of white musk and powdered frankincense will soften my arms and help Wood Function seem more interesting, creating the fragrant equivalent of a conversation—and a lingerie ensemble.

Back at the hotel, the air in my room smells stuffy. I try lighting some frankincense I bought at the souk. Pearl-sized globs shine and dissolve in the heat, releasing a fragrance of citrus, mint, black pepper and camphor. The Omani practice of burning incense for pleasure as well as hygiene is a remnant of a time when frankincense, a multi-purpose aromatic that has →

antiseptic qualities, repelled bugs and appeased deities in the temples of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome and Byzantium. Today in mosques, shopping malls, offices, and hotel lobbies across the country, translucent nuggets sizzle and sputter on charcoal braziers or electric incense burners, the practice so prevalent that travellers immediately register Oman's signature scent.

At the Land of Frankincense Museum in Salalah, there is a small ornamental orchard of *Boswellia sacra* trees, whose sap forms this aromatic. But to visit the wild groves where the resin is actually harvested requires a guide and a 4x4. Mussallem Hassan Masoud Al Mahri, a 51-year-old former Omani Army officer, picks me up at my beach hotel the next morning; we are headed to the Frankincense Park of Wadi Dawkah, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

My guide tells me he was born in a cave to a family of camel and goat herders, and his sense of smell is alarmingly acute. "Later I will smell camel on your sweat," Al Mahri predicts confidently over a lunch of boiled leg of camel, young camel stewed with onion, garlic, and tomato and camel preserved in its own fat, served with a side of rice scented with spices. Back on the road, wondering if the sharp-nosed locals find camel-tinged sweat appealing or repulsive, I tell Al Mahri that he and his four-wheel drive smell nice. "Frankincense," he says with a grin, pointing to his mouth and a stash stored in the glove compartment. "It's better than any chewing gum. The flavour lasts all day and it kills bacteria. Plus it gets rid of gas and keeps your belly light."

Al Mahri explains that harvesters tap the trees three times between March and August, recutting in the same spot to get a progressively stronger-smelling sap, which is left to harden for two weeks before being collected



“Across the country, translucent nuggets sizzle on braziers or burners, the practice so prevalent that travellers immediately register the national scent”

Top row: roses are often used in air fresheners. **Bottom row, from left:** a bakhour is a blend of aromatics; Gold, Amouage's first scent. **Previous pages:** Omani men often dip the tassel of their dishdasha into their preferred scent

and sorted according to shape, purity, origin and colour. He insists that the frankincense that grows farther east, in the crannies of the Jebel Samhan, Dhofar's highest mountain, is even better. There, Al Mahri buys his personal supply from an elderly grove owner.

To get a better fix on the different grades of frankincense, I arrange to meet Trygve Harris, an American from Santa Barbara who moved to Salalah in 2008 to source aromatics for Enfleurage, her essential oils company in Manhattan. The outgoing

strawberry blonde has attended secretive oud auctions in India and the flower harvests of Egypt's Nile Delta.

Harris earned the respect of locals by inventing Oman's first frankincense ice cream, which she cranks out in artisanal batches using frankincense oil from her small distillery and full-cream cow's milk purchased from the sultan's personal Dhofar dairy. It sounds like one of those weird trophy foods that travellers try for boasting rights. But when she scoops some out of the cooler →

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1 A MEMBER OF DESIGN HOTELS

brought to my hotel, I am immediately addicted to the most amazingly delicious ice cream of my life—not too sweet, camphor cool without being medicinal and with that same lovely confusion of taste and smell you get when eating a rose water-infused lokum, or Turkish delight. “I make it using black frankincense that grows near the sea,” Harris says cheerfully, offering me a second bowl. “Those trees on the cliffs above Mughsayl beach produce resin with a spicy, orange note.”

On the Gulf of Oman, 1,000km north of Salalah, Muscat was once the base of a maritime empire that stretched from Mozambique to Baluchistan. The end of African slavery and the rise of modern European shipping in the 19th century led to the decline of Oman’s warships and wooden trading dhows, some of which were larger than Portuguese galleons.

In 1970, when Sultan Qaboos took power from his father in a British-backed coup, Muscat was a backwater with less than 15km of paved roads, including the driveway from the Muttrah souk to the royal palace. Oil wealth sped up the city’s transformation into a modern capital, guided by the vision of the scent-loving ruler, who built a mountaintop lookout in the shape of a giant incense burner.

Amid the distractions of 21st-century life, frankincense connects Omani urban sophisticates to their heritage, to nature, and to spiritual life. At the capital’s Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, high-quality frankincense burns in the underground air-conditioning plant, and I detect its scent wafting over shelves holding Qurans and into the men’s hall that has space for 6,500 worshippers. “To smell good in the mosque is a sign of respect for your religion and fellow man,” observes Murtadha Al Lawati, one of the faithful. “It prepares your little soul to meet the big soul.”

Amouage, Oman’s prestigious (and only) international fragrance line, was founded in 1983 and today, it’s one of the world’s most expensive brands. Although frankincense was the inspiration, Amouage cannot use the genuine ingredient these days, ironically relying, like several manufacturers, on bespoke synthetic molecules. “To be in the perfume industry you have to be a chemist,” says David Crickmore, the company’s British CEO, with a sigh. “We can’t use natural frankincense because the International Fragrance Association has decided that it can be allergenic.” →



Rose is a popular scent and flavour, used in perfumes and sweets



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While sipping cappuccinos in the private consultation room of Amouage's flagship boutique, I meet Hassan Al-Saleh, a 30 something Georgetown University graduate and the managing partner of a Muscat PR company. "I love putting fragrance on my tassel," he confides. Fingering the six-inch-long tuft of white silk dangling from the neckline of his dishdasha, he says dreamily, "When the tassel moves, you might catch a whiff of something completely surprising and unexpected."

To give me an idea of how an Omani might combine scents, Al-Saleh shares an account of his routine prior to a formal event. Just after showering, he spritzes perfume on damp skin. Then he selects a bespoke dishdasha infused with incense, whose sleeve trim matches a length of paisley-printed wool that he wraps into a turban. "If I wake up feeling incredibly confident," Al-Saleh says, "I might slap pure oud oil on my temples, although oud is really for evening or special occasions."

I ask a salesman if I can try Attar Oud Al Khaloud, or Oud of Eternity. This molasses-thick essential oil is distilled from authentic Indian resins, some more than thirty years old. Sniffing the drop on the back of my hand, I'm shocked by its almost unwearable concentration. This is surely the perfume world's equivalent of durian, the delicious Asian fruit whose paradoxical faecal stink gets you kicked off a flight if you try to smuggle one on board. Peaty, fungal, and overwhelmingly raunchy, the attar conjures a sweaty stallion whizzing on a decaying pile of clover. Yet hours later, the fragrance has nearly seduced me, evolving on my skin into something pleasantly full and woody.

Back at my home in Cairo, I unpack boxes of frankincense and myrrh, the glass jar of Wood



Omanis already know what they like and don't like; many buy pure ingredients and make their own bakhoor, layering fragrances like artists do colours


Clockwise from top left: rose; saffron; frankincense; oud; sandalwood

Function, a can of Oud Aerosol Car Freshener, rose oil, an oud travel candle, an oud oil blended with saffron and amber.

My spouse comes home from work. A taste bud-challenged diner who once reported after a meal at a three-Michelin-star restaurant, "I liked that fish with the sauce," he is appreciative, but a bit overwhelmed by the unfamiliar bouquets. I ask him to close his eyes as I build up the layers and talk of souks, old palaces, women trailing scent to a desert well, perfumed tassels and frankincense burners.

"Oud and frankincense are ingrained in Omani DNA," Hassan Al-Saleh had told me. "When a baby is born, relatives will rub oud oil between their hands and massage it into the baby's blanket as a gesture of purity, and to me the scent still

feels comforting. When I was studying abroad, I would put on oud and burn a little bakhoor if I felt homesick. The combination of oud and bakhoor is something that we Omanis will always carry with us."

My husband and I inhale, and suddenly we are there too, in an antique land, travelling on waves of scent into the future. 

GETTING THERE

Fly direct to Muscat with Oman Air (www.omanair.com) or Jet Airways (www.jetairways.com) from Mumbai. Indian passport-holders can apply for a visa with tour operators such as Cox & Kings (www.coxandkings.com). Visas cost from ₹300 and take up to five days to process.

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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

Some travel to Tokyo to realise their dreams of Jiro sushi. Some go to slurp as much ramen as possible. Yet others go for the street fashion of Harajuku or to see how 13 million people live crammed together so peacefully. Me? I went to drink. I know—it sounds like a silly reason to visit one of the world's greatest cities. But drinking in Tokyo is an art. From the extra layer of foam on a draught beer to the handmade sake cups to the carved ice in your Old Fashioned, you can literally drink high (a cocktail on a hotel's 52nd floor) and low (a glass of Kirin below a subway station). To a visitor, drinking here is an often confusing, sometimes bizarre, series of rituals, but ultimately it's a blast. And you may even learn a few things between sips. Here's how to discover the city one glass at a time.



GO TO FRANCE, NATURALLY

The Japanese excel at taking one country's good idea and turning it into their own great idea. In the case of **Ahiru Store**, that means doing the best take on the kind of natural wine bar that's more closely associated with the 10th arrondissement of Paris. This tiny oasis, a short walk from bustling Shibuya Station, might be Tokyo's worst-kept drinking secret (check the line that forms every evening). Inside, customers gather around wine barrels that double up as tables, drinking from the impeccably curated, mostly biodynamic, occasionally funky selections lining the wall. And the menu of pâtés, charcuterie and other rustic French food will have you saying: Wait, where am I? Welcome to Tokyo, home of the best wine bar outside of France!

SIP WHISKY HIGHBALLS

A few years ago, Suntory, distilling and brewing company, faced a dilemma: how to get young adults to drink whisky. Thus was born the highball, an effervescent mix of brown liquor and sparkling water. Today, you'll find Kaku highballs (named after Suntory's flagship whisky, Kakubin) at 7-Elevens, in vending machines and in bars. Just say "Highball!" and nothing is lost in translation.

DRINK IN THE VIEW

At Tokyo's high-end and high-up hotel bars, the views of the city are the main attraction. There's the iconic **New York Bar at the Park Hyatt**, where Bill and Scarlett had their almost-tryst. There's the **Mandarin Bar at the Mandarin Oriental** and the **Rooftop Bar at the brand-new Andaz**. Yes, you'll pay top price, but it's Tokyo and you get to see it all, right from your bar stool.

GET SCHOOLED IN JIZAKE

Shockingly, sake isn't exactly big in Japan (it only represents a fraction of alcohol sales). Tell that to the cool kids at **SakeBozu**. On the second floor of an office building (look for a tiny chalkboard and a candle on the street), the owner serves jizake (artisanal) sakes poured from comically large bottles. Ask to try some of his favourites.



EXPERIMENT WITH SHERRY

I was trying to find a "secret" sushi joint when I stumbled upon **Taimei Bar**. It's the size of a walk-in closet and specialises in all things sherry. Of the mind-boggling variety of sherry-based cocktails on offer, try the signature Myoga Sherry and Tonic made with muddled myoga (a type of Japanese ginger). It's an ideal predinner drink.

EXPLORE GOLDEN GAI

This low-slung shanty town in skyscraper-heavy Shinjuku consists of six narrow alleys lined with more than 200 tiny bars, many of them themed. My first stop played heavy metal turned to 11. Next was a bar for book lovers, then a Filipino-run joint, then a place where the owner was sleeping on three tiny stools (we roused him and then ordered). Lose yourself in the *Blade Runner*-like experience. I guarantee you'll have plenty of stories to tell afterwards.



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LOITER AT A LIQUOR STORE

In northern Tokyo's Yanaka neighbourhood, at the top of the Yuyake Dandan stairs that lead down to the main shopping area, sits a no-nonsense liquor store called **Oshima**. It's been selling booze for more than 100 years. Patron saint Mrs Oshima is usually outside, laughing, telling stories and serving alcohol in plastic cups to locals sitting on beer crates covered with flattened boxes for padding. If she offers you a snack of shrimp chips and a beer, take her up on it and stay long enough to watch night descend over Tokyo.



NERD OUT ON COCKTAILS

Star Bar, High Five, Mori Bar, Tender Bar, Bar Radio—Tokyo's cocktail temples are legendary. The bartenders wear white jackets. The ice is hand-chipped. The drinks are mixed with style and grace. For me, it's like going to church. My new favourite spot is an eight-seat bar called **Gen Yamamoto**. That's the name of the owner, bartender and, as far as I could tell, only employee. Here, low-alcohol, technicolour juice-based drinks are made with fruit and vegetables like kiwi and tomato, combined with shochu, sake, and other light spirits.

カクテル道

HANG WITH THE COOLEST MAN IN TOKYO

Kobayashi-san is a 60-something former salaryman who quit his job—a bold move in Japan—to open **JBS (Jazz, Blues, Soul)**, a small bar in Shibuya that's an updated take on post-war jazz cafés. He's smart, funny, patient and has one of the best vinyl collections on the planet. He also makes a mean gin and tonic—after throwing back a few, you'll stop trying to stump him with a request. He's got all the greats: Miles, Coltrane, Mingus and Monk. And when a friend asked for Shalamar, a '70s disco-driven trio, he just smiled, walked around the bar, and pulled out not one but three records. I want to be him when I grow up.



SCARF STUFF ON STICKS

You'll often find me at one of Tokyo's smoky, crowded yakitori spots, snacking on skewers of tsukune (chicken meatballs), tebasaki (chicken wings), and bonjiri (chicken tails). And washing them all down with highballs, beer and sake. Yakitori is everywhere, but I like **Takechan in Ginza**, and **Kushiwakamaru in Nakameguro**.

GO BEYOND SAPPORO

The big-name Japanese beers are great when you're slurping a bowl of ramen, but sometimes you need something with more character. Thankfully, the craft-beer boom has reached Japan. At a small chain called **Craft Beer Market**, I sampled Osaru IPA from Minoh, Kolsch from Loco, and an African Pale Ale from Shiga Kogen. Grab a stool at bars like **Sansa**, **Watering Hole**, **Pigalle**, and the soon-to-open Danish import **Mikkeller**.

EAT ALL-YOU-CAN-DRINK SUSHI

Tokyo's top sushi-yas aren't cheap. Places like **Mizutani**, **Sushi-Ya** and **Hatsune** run upwards of ¥30,900 (¥16,030) a pop, in which you get tuna in all its forms (toro, chutoro, otoro), uni from Hokkaido and freshly grated wasabi. But no matter how much sake and beer you drink, the meal's set cost never wavers. So drink up!

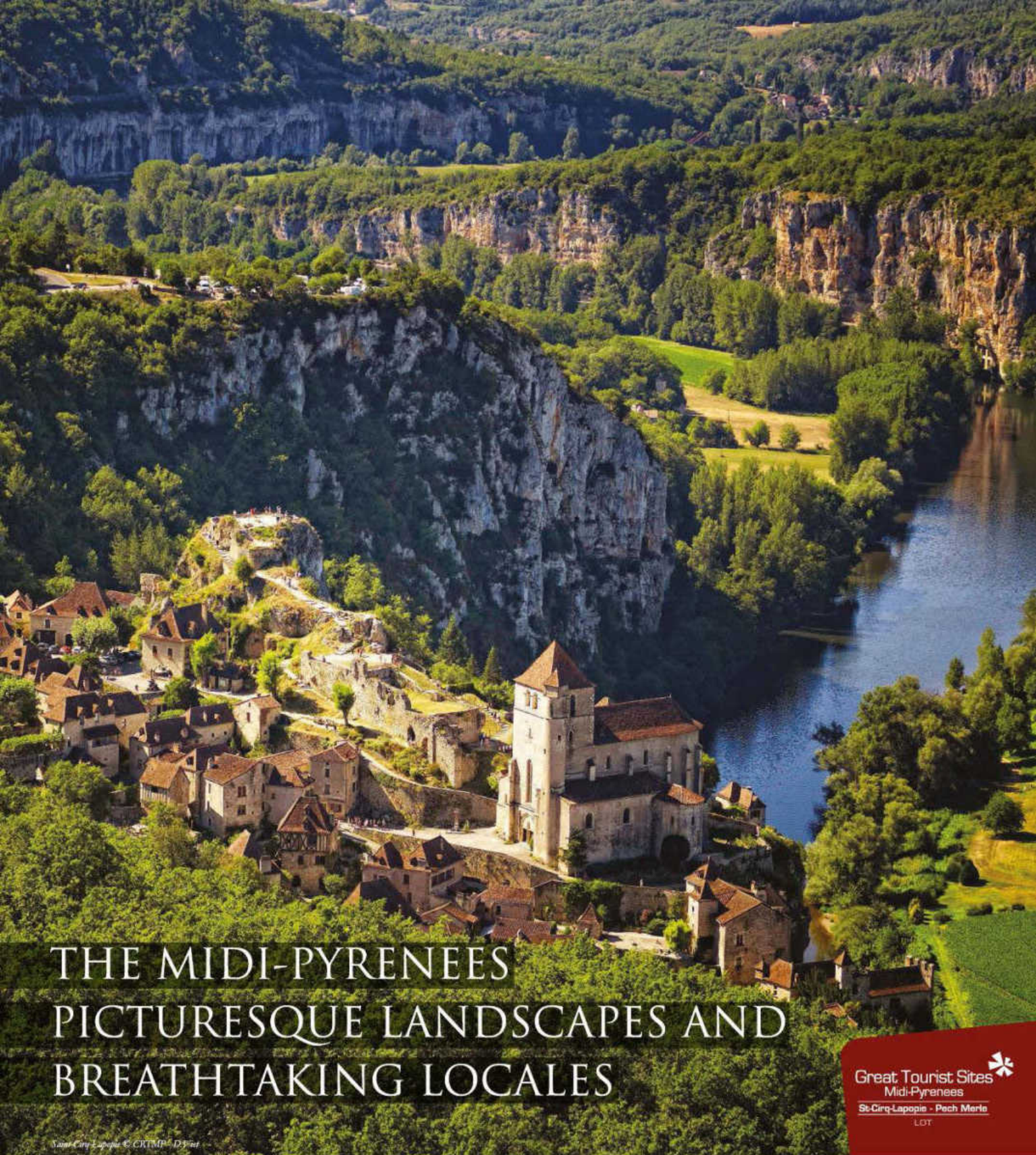
KARAOKE!

Locals are so serious about their karaoke that even sober people do it. My first experience was at a place called **Big Echo**, the Walmart of Japanese karaoke chains. Reserve a private room, order a few rounds of Orion beers and the next thing you know, your rendition of David Bowie's 'Changes' starts to sound pretty good.



FORGET ALL YOU KNOW ABOUT 7-ELEVEN. IN TOKYO, NO NIGHT OUT WOULD BE COMPLETE WITHOUT A STOP ON THE STUMBLE HOME.





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THE CASE FOR EATING



ONIGIRI IN PARIS

When you're on vacation, every meal counts. And while you should definitely eat soup dumplings in Shanghai and soufflé in Paris, it pays to go against type—at least for one meal. **Matt Duckor** lists 10 cities that have great food that's not local



Wake up to something extraordinary. A velvet-voiced crooner right outside your room. Nudge aside the curtains and you can see a Whistling Bird serenading you. Watch a sunrise that looks like Van Gogh painted it. A prelude to the evening show: the fiery sunset! And when nature plays the songs of Cicadas, close your eyes and drift off into dreamland. This is a place where you can call a day unforgettable and still realise it's an understatement.

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PERUVIAN IN MIAMI

The Mandarin Oriental already had Azul, arguably the best fine-dining restaurant in Miami. Then, last summer, the hotel welcomed chef Gastón Acurio and his new ceviche-heavy casual spot, **La Mar**, to the family. Go heavy on the raw fish dishes, but don't miss the whipped Peruvian potatoes, known as *causas*, which are topped with everything from nori to octopus tartare. (500 Brickell Key Drive)

JAPANESE IN PARIS

While young Japanese chefs have long made a habit of travelling to Paris to work in its many temples of haute cuisine (L'Arpège, Guy Savoy and Le Louis XV) Casters belongs to a generation that prefers going it alone. **6306**, his sliver of an izakaya, offers a rotating roster of 10 à la carte dishes each night, such as a green salad tossed with a tarragon and beet vinaigrette, or clams sautéed with sake and green cabbage. And the

matcha crème brûlée embodies what might be called *Nouvelle Japonais*. (82 rue Jean-Pierre Timbaud)

FRENCH PASTRIES IN TOKYO (VIA NEW YORK)

When faced with the question of where to open his first bakery outside Manhattan, Cronut creator **Dominique Ansel** looked to Tokyo's fashionable Omotesando Hills shopping complex. It makes sense: Japan is enamoured as much with all things American as with culinary invention of every kind—making it a perfect match for the man who blessed us with the chocolate-chip-cookie shot glasses filled with milk. (4-12-10 Jingumae, Shibuya)

KOREAN IN NEW DELHI

The Indian love of Chinese food (and for local versions of it) is legendary. But the next time you're in the capital, give this lesser-known cuisine a chance at **Gung The Palace**. Try the delicious slices of duck seasoned with

Top row: a chef at Bæst checking meats; fried chicken with collard greens at The Lockhart. Previous page: scallop aguachile with poached jicama and fresh wasabi-cucumber-lime at Cosme

red chilli and barbecued pork belly. Vegetarians have a separate set of dishes to pick from and the staff is happy to prepare a green equivalent of anything on the menu, in egg-free versions as well. (www.gung.in)

INDIAN IN LONDON

With the number of Indian expats in the English capital, this one should really come as no surprise. Everyone's talking about **Dishoom**, a take on Mumbai's Irani cafés (but with alcohol), whose name comes from the sound of a punch in a typical Bollywood movie fight scene. There are three outlets—in King's Cross, Shoreditch and Covent Garden. But the food is consistently good at all three. Try classics such as *bun maska*, *kheema per eedu*, *akuri* and *eggs Kejriwal*. But whatever you do, don't skip the bacon naan roll—a signature dish. The décor is evocative of an Irani café, except at King's Cross, where it's, fittingly, more like an Indian railway station during the British Raj. (www.dishoom.com)

SOUTHERN US IN LONDON

At **The Lockhart**, in Marylebone, Chef Bradford McDonald (a Per Se alumnus and Mississippi native) smartens up classic versions of traditional dishes in a seasonal menu. Smoked pork belly comes with braised cabbage in a barbecue reduction; seared venison loin, with pumpkin purée. Of course, with sides of Cheddar grits and collard greens. And there's baked-to-order cornbread. (www.lockhartlondon.com) →





ETHIOPIAN IN WASHINGTON, DC

Ethiopian food is known to be spicy, meaty and sinfully heavy. And at **Ethiopic**, it's all so good. Dig into dishes like tibs, a fiery leg of lamb sautéed with jalapeño peppers, garlic and herbs. This comes in a cubed beef equivalent too. If you want something milder, chicken can be tossed and served with a hardboiled egg. And vegetarians need not fear; there are enough options for them as well, such as spicy chickpea dumplings, curried potatoes and a variety of lentil-based dishes. All vegetarian mains here are vegan. (www.ethiopicrestaurant.com)

MEXICAN IN NEW YORK

At Pujol, Enrique Olvera's Mexico City flagship restaurant, he takes an almost anthropological approach to the cuisine of his ancestors (think 300-day mole madre and "deconstructed" lamb taco). But at **Cosme**, in Manhattan's Flatiron District, the star chef is more concerned with what modern Mexican

food looks like in America. So you'll have a menu that celebrates flavours rooted in Mexico, but the ingredients are sourced locally and based on season. The restaurant combines the best of what's happening in food culture now (small plates, not a tablecloth in sight) with the dishes Olvera has built his reputation on, like single-origin corn tortillas paired with black garlic-rubbed New York strip steak. (35 E. 21st Street)

PIZZA IN COPENHAGEN

Beest is an organic Italian restaurant run by Sicilian-born Christian Puglisi, the acclaimed chef (and, yes, Noma alumnus) behind the New Nordic temple Relae. You'll get slices sagging with Hindsholm sausage and kale or Lolin anchovies and onions. As Puglisi puts it, "Pizza is the most international thing—it's truly global." And his is, quite literally, a melting pot of ingredients: he uses a blend of freshly milled local and imported Italian flour for the dough, and the charcuterie is cured in-house from pigs sourced

Top row: the interiors of Dishoom in King's Cross; a charcuterie platter at Bæst. Bottom row: a dish at La Mar, served in a traditional hand-carved fisherman's boat; Chef Enrique Olvera of Cosme

from the picturesque dairy town of Hindsholm, about two hours outside of Copenhagen. (Guldbergsgade 29)

FRENCH IN SHANGHAI

Chef Nicolas Le Bec caused quite the stir when he shut down his two Michelin-starred restaurant in Lyon and then popped up in faraway China. But it makes perfect sense: the Shanghaiese have a love of most everything French. **Villa Le Bec** is housed in a restored villa on a pretty, tree-lined street and has both a buzzing bistro as well as a newly opened fine-dining space. Head upstairs and go casual (it's more affordable, too): share servings of the foie gras, oysters and the highlight of our meal, a vegetarian truffle pasta. Some French dishes are given an Asian twist, such as the escargot seasoned with ginger and leek, and paté infused with five-spice. The wine list is extensive, and of course, very truly French. Some good things even Le Bec won't mess with. (321 Xinhua Lu) 

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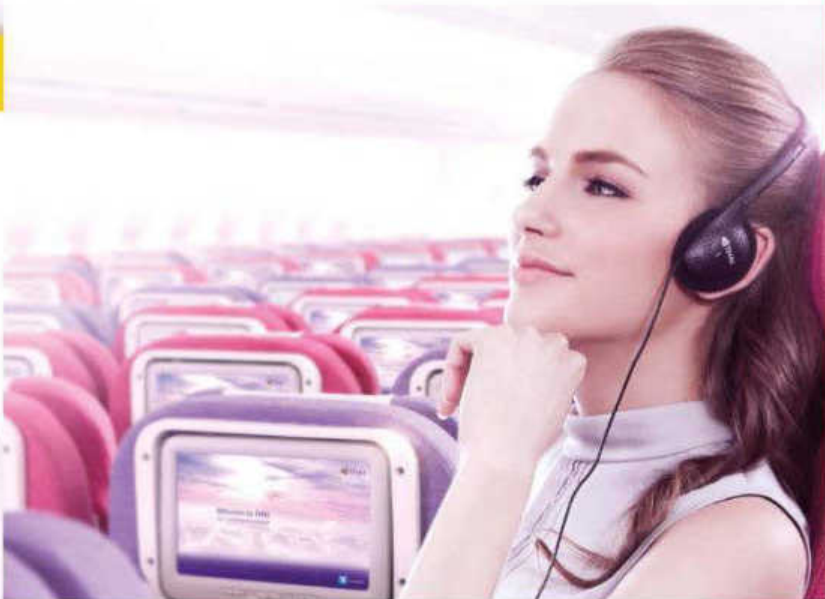
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CHILDREN IN THE CITY STOCKHOLM

Pretending to be Vikings or retracing the steps of Pippi Longstocking, little ones will have a blast in the Swedish capital. By **Rick Jordan**

CULTURAL FIX

Everyone will point you in the direction of **Djurgården** (www.visitdjurgarden.se), the city's playground island, and you'd be a fool to ignore them. While **Gröna Lund** (www.gronalund.com) has some alarmingly dizzying rides, it also has the innate civility of a '50s amusement park, with a twinkly-eyed gent in a top hat bidding you farewell at the exit. The brooding, 17th-century galleon inside the hangar-like **Vasa Museum** (www.vasamuseet.se) will send shivers down kids' spines with its dark, hulking presence—in the future, this is how captured alien spaceships will be displayed. **Junibacken** (www.junibacken.se) is a knockabout play area where the highlight is the Story Train: the red-painted wooden carriages trundle through the fictional worlds of Astrid Lindgren (familiarity with her freckle-faced heroine Pippi Longstocking isn't essential), swooping high over wintry villages and past ominous mountains. It's lovingly modelled, magical and exhilarating, even for 40-something fathers. For a pick-me-up, dip into **Blå Porten** (www.blaporten.com), an outdoorsy restaurant and café, or the newly rejigged, waterside **Sjöcaféet** (www.sjocafeet.se) near Junibacken, which also rents out canoes and bikes.

BE A VIKING

Let the children hone their Dark Age skills in the courtyard garden at the **Swedish History Museum** (www.historiska.se). It turns into an affably lo-fi Norse village in the summer, with bread-making, archery and jousting. Down a flight of steps, in central Gamla →



Clockwise from top: a ride at Gröna Lund; jumping into the water at Långholmen; Grandpa, a shop in SoFo; a young girl enjoying autumn in Stockholm



PHOTOGRAPHS: FREDRIK NYMAN/JOHNÉR IMAGES/CORBIS; DORIS BELING/FOLIO; YADID LEVY/ROBERT HARDING WORLD IMAGERY/CORBIS; SHUTTERSTOCK

Arabian Nights

With rolling deserts, expansive mountain ranges and deep blue waters, Oman is teeming with experiences waiting to be uncovered. Whether it's for a luxury escapade, visiting historical sites or indulging in thrilling adventures, the Sultanate of Oman is ideal for a quick getaway



Urban Escapades

Start off your trip in the capital city, Muscat. Venture to Oman's main mosque, *Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque*, to see the world's second largest chandelier and single piece of carpet, get stunning views of the old city at *Al-Jalali* and *Al-Mirani* forts, or indulge in ballet and opera performances at the *Royal Opera House Muscat*.

To encounter manta rays and lemon sharks, scuba dive at *Bandar al Khayran* bay and the *Daymaniyat archipelago* or take a boat ride to see the dolphins jumping.

While in Muscat, book yourself a luxurious stay at a hotel such as the centrally-located *The Chedi, Muscat*, which has a mix of traditional and modern architecture. For rooms with views choose between the *Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah Resort and Spa*, and the *Al Bustan*

Palace, A Ritz-Carlton Hotel; both offer unparalleled views of the Gulf of Oman.

Turn back the time

Known for its monuments and handicrafts, Nizwa was once the seat of power in the 6th and 7th centuries. You can view the past at the *Nizwa Fort*, the country's most visited national monument. The *Nizwa Souq* is also worth a visit, with vendors selling fresh produce, leather goods and copper and silver trinkets. While in Nizwa, stay at the *Alila Jabal Akhdar* that is surrounded by the *Al Hajar Mountains*.

Desert Highways

If you want to indulge in adventure sports, head to the *Sharqiyah Sands* where the dunes can spread out upto 200km. Here you can enlist in a number of activities like dune bashing, which involves driving over the dunes

at high speeds, sand skiing and quad biking. In the winter months, cheer on the Bedouins as they participate in tradition Camel Racing events. In the Sharqiyah Sands, stay at the *Desert Nights Camp* hotel, which organises visits to a Bedouin house.

Turtle Paradise

A trip to Oman is never complete without a visit to the *Ras Al Hadd Turtle Reserve* in Ras Al Jinz. From June to November, sign up for early morning and late night guided excursions to see the green sea turtles come to the beach to lay their eggs and witness baby turtles hatching and taking their first steps towards the water.

Complete with a number of enriching experiences, your trip to Oman is sure to be the most memorable.

For more information, visit www.omantourism.gov.om

Stan, is **Aifur** (www.aifur.se), a restaurant to get any role-playing fans hot under their jerkin collars: arrivals are given a rousing introduction and welcomed with a clatter of goblets on rough-hewn wooden tables. It only uses ingredients that were available to the Vikings, so bear, elk and moose are on the menu—but not chips (the spud didn't arrive here until the 1760s).

JOIN THE BAND

ABBA The Museum (www.abbathemuseum.com) will embrace you in its warm, orange-brown 1970s nostalgia. It follows the four from pre-Eurovision (look out for the photo of a beardless Benny, as a toddler) to, several jumpsuits later, their split in the 1980s. Between mock-ups of their studio and lakeside cabin, where the songs were written, you can remix the hits, dance like a loon under mirror balls and perform on stage with holograms of the band (all of this hilarity can later be downloaded at home). ABBA was initially a mystery to my five-year-old; now it's the only band he listens to.

BEACH SCENE

The great Swedish summer tradition of plunging into 15°C water is one that should be embraced. The best and most accessible bathing spot is on **Långholmen** (<http://langholmen.com>), a former prison island that's an easy meander from the waterside area of Hornstull. Make your way to the northern shore, where you'll find a small sandy beach and a very paddle-able cove, with an outdoor shower. After you've dried off, wander back through the flower-filled allotment gardens (there's a café should you feel peckish post-swim) and past the prison walls. (There are still inmates of sorts: the cells have been turned into a hostel-hotel.)

SHOPPING

With its wide pavements and relatively traffic-free streets, the hipster enclave of SoFo or **South of Folkungagatan**, in Södermalm, is made for an afternoon dawdle. Base yourself in leafy Nytorget Park and check out **Mini Rodini** (www.minirodini.com) and **Rackarungar** (www.rackarungar.se) for cool kids' clothing, **Hipp!** (www.hippstory.com) for fairground-bright jewellery, totes and prints, **Sneakersnstuff** (www.sneakersnstuff.com) for cult, Finnish Karhu trainers, and **Pärlans Konfektyr** (www.parlanskonfektyr.se) for candy. Look out for funky clog cobbler **Swedish Hasbeens** (www.swedishhasbeens.com) on Nytorpgatan,



A display at Artipelag. Above from left: Emma Jenkins, the owner of Frankie's Coffee; cakes at the food truck

“ABBA was initially a mystery to my five-year-old; now it's the only band he listens to.”

and when you need a break from buying stuff for the kids, nip into **Grandpa** (www.grandpa.se) for clothes, accessories and nifty home furnishings. Don't miss **Hornstull**, on Södermalm's western tip, where highlights include the cinema/café **Bio Rio** (www.biorio.se), **Juiceverket** (www.juiceverket.se) for a misleadingly named Eggs & Bacon smoothie (it has apple, fennel, raspberry, agave and liquorice) and **Friends of Adam** (www.friendsofadam.se) for gluten-free muffins. Time your visit to coincide with the weekend market where you can pick up anything from vintage film posters to Acne jeans, and tap

into its food-truck scene: **Frankie's Coffee** (www.frankiescoffee.se) for great cakes; **Bun Truck** (www.bunbun.se) for banh mi.

EATING

Small portions of mains rather than special children's menus are the norm in Stockholm, so experiment with lobster omelette or reindeer heart (with mini burgers as backup) at **Nytorget 6** (www.nytorget6.com) in SoFo. Across the road is the all-rounder **Urban Deli** (www.urbandeli.org), which even has a sourdough 'hotel' where local bakers can store their starters; in summer, →

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grab salads, salami and crispbreads for a picnic in the park opposite. Near Hötorget in the city centre is **K25** (www.k25.nu), a food court concept that's rare for Sweden; pick up burritos, Thai fish cakes, meze or just a cup of tea and sit at the communal long table. Its 19th-century precursor is the red-brick **Östermalms Saluhall market** (www.ostermalmshallen.se), with its leering moose heads, pickled herrings and fat oysters. For ice cream, **StikkiNikki** (www.stikkinikki.com) has organic saffron and salted caramel flavours, and the suave, Italian-style **Taverna Brillo** (www.tavernabrillo.se) has gelatos in hazelnut, pistachio and more (as well as inventive pizza toppings such as cockles, mint and chilli). **Niklas Ekstedt** (www.ekstedt.nu), meanwhile, is a twisted firestarter chef of Michelin standing who chimney-smokes and firepit-scorches trout, lobster and more at his eponymous restaurant, suitable for older teens. On weekends, join Stockholm families for the popular brunch at **T/BAR in the Hotel Diplomat** (www.diplomathotel.com) and watch boats cast off for the islands.

DAY TRIP

Stockholm's archipelago is vast, and you can embark on meandering voyages around the islands, medieval towns and citadels.

Artipelag (www.artipelag.se), however, is a little different. Take the 10.30am ferry from the central Nybrokajen pier and 90 minutes later, you'll land at a small jetty and trip down a wooden walkway, past glittering water and through green glades, until you spy a jauntily modern piece of architecture hiding amid the pines. A sculpted human form teeters on a roof edge, a huge boulder rises through the shiny concrete floor like a breaching whale, floor-to-ceiling gallery windows frame forest views. It's probably the only art space with potties in the gift shop—the owner is the founder of BabyBjörn, the company that makes ergonomic baby carriers and other such products.

WHERE TO STAY

Stockholm is like the Busytown of Richard Scarry's excellent books, with rattling trams and trains criss-crossing on bridges and tunnels, and vessels of all sizes paddling in and out of the harbour: tugboats honking like geese, cruise ships muscling in from Riga and Tallinn. The views from **Hotel J** (www.hotelj.com; doubles from SEK1,190 or £9,300) at Nacka Strand are as mesmerising as an HBO box set. From the terrace of your J Newport Seaview room—or a deckchair on the sloping



Clockwise from top: inside ABBA The Museum; a waterside café in Djurgården; footwear at Swedish Hasbeens

lawn outside—watch the water turn milky-white at dusk and hot-air balloons bob above the islands. Set in a couple of 19th-century buildings with a modern wing, rooms are tricked out in white panelling and star-spangled blankets. Rise early to bag a window table for breakfast (Gotland eggs, carrot jam) in the waterside villa, then race along the quayside to skim stones with your little ones beneath the statue that surfs on a flume of water. Further along is the hotel's port-holed Restaurant J, great for lunchtime moules and meatballs. The boat to the old town leaves from the marina here (it's a 15-minute trip). Alternatively, roam the grounds (there's a playground in the Gruffalo woods behind) and book a sailing lesson or an authentic Swedish massage in the nearby spa villa for yourself. After a day out, curl up on one of the lobby sofas and pour something from the honesty bar; if you're lucky, the staff will just be sliding

a batch of cinnamon buns from the oven. The **Pop House Hotel** (<http://pophousehotel.se>; doubles from SEK1,695 or £13,200) is the ABBA museum's official hotel, on Djurgården, and the staff is happy to organise extra beds for children. If you want to splurge a little, stay at the **Grand Hôtel** (www.grandhotel.se; doubles from SEK3,145 or £24,500) opposite the Royal Palace. 

GETTING THERE

Fly SAS Scandinavian Airlines (www.flysas.com. Stopover in Munich) or Emirates (www.emirates.com. Stopover in Dubai) from Mumbai or New Delhi. Indian passport-holders can apply for a Schengen visa with VFS India (www.vfsglobal.com). Visas take up to 12 days to process and cost £4,300.

WHEN TO GO

Summer (June–August), when the weather is most pleasant

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The ultimate garba guide to Gujarat

All you need to know—from the coolest designer outfits, to dancing spots and feasting places—on making the most of your trip to Gujarat this Navratri



It's closing in on that time of the year when Gujaratis of every stripe (and passport) schedule a holiday to their motherland. It's when DJs, musicians, celebrities and fashion designers have their calendars full. Navratri, Gujarat's favourite festival, is getting bigger and better this year, especially in Vadodara, Ahmedabad and Surat. And here's a low-down on how to garba like a Gujarati.

VADODRA

In Vadodara, planning for Navratri and garba begins months in advance and the hangover lasts well until Sharad Purnima. But since it's the culture capital of the state, music is strictly folk—no disco or Bollywood here; the participants' dress-code is also the prescriptive with *chania-cholis* for women and *kediyu-kafnis* for men.

Where to dance: The most sought after event here is organised by United Way of Baroda (UWB). With nearly 40,000 passes sold each year, there's a rush for spectator and participant passes in VIP enclosures. Other venues include the Maa Shakti Garba, Vishwas Colony, MPC Gymkhana and M S University. It's recommended you book your passes in advance, especially for venues like UWB (www.onlineunitedway.org). For other venues, passes are available at organisers' offices.

Stars to watch: The 20-year-old Rutambhara, a cult music group, is often seen at UWB belting out popular folk songs like *Tara Vina Shyam* and *Hove Hove*. Achal Mehta, a local garba star, performs for the Maa Shakti banner. And Paritosh Goswami, another old favourite, performs at Vishwas Garba.

Garba garb: The best garba outfits for both men and women can be found at boutiques like Abstract, Tatva Design Studio, Uneven Threads, Rang Vesh, Ayaanjal Couture, Friendship Bazaar, Apratim Design Studio and Mamta's Collection. Nava Bazaar, in the old city, is worth a trip for fun accessories.

Feast away: There is a food festival inside every garba venue where top caterers and hotels of Vadodara compete with local fast food stalls. World cuisine rubs shoulders with the likes of



PHOTO COURTESY : AVIK PAUL

subway sandwiches, handvo, papdi-no-lot, dabeli, cheese naan, tandoori corn cobs and malai seekh kababs, amongst others. For an after-garba-feast Kai Asia at Taj, Peshawari at WelcomHotel – ITC and Ratri Bazaar are worth a visit.

Other attractions: If you'd rather watch than perform, look out for the Bhavai show at the Ambaji Temple where performers dance on the edge of a sword or on the rim of a brass thaali, while balancing several earthen pots on their heads.

SURAT

If jewellery and dressing is your thing, then Surat—the diamond and textile capital of India—is where you should go. Navratri nights add more razzle and dazzle to the city of *Surti Lallas*—folks with a penchant for indulgent revelry and a knack to dress, eat and drive the best.

Where to dance: The largest garba congregation happens at the Vanita Vishram Grounds. While Pandit Dindayal

Upadhyay Indoor Sports Stadium offers air-conditioned environments, the garbas at Cityplus Mall, Holiday Inn Surat, and, The Grand Bhagwati Hotel and Banquets are equally fun. But if you want to step away from the main city, opt for garbas by the Divine Group at Piplod or the Rainbow Group at Sarsana, on the outskirts of Surat. While passes are available at the venues, avoid last minute rush with advance bookings through www.bookmyshow.com

Stars to watch: While several troupes entertain revellers with dandiya remixes of Bollywood hits, in the past Himesh Reshammiya's most sought after orchestra has performed at the Vanita Vishram Grounds. Bollywood and TV stars are often spotted at CityPlus Mall, and music artists like Bali Brahmabhatt, Shefali Jariwala and Vinod Rathod regularly perform at Surat's garba gigs.

Garba garb: While you can always pick ready-to-wear outfits from the malls on Adajan and Dumas Road, get designers like Pranali Choksi and Sheetal Rajput to

create your garba outfits with the finest bandhinis and embellishments.

Feast away: Try the surti undhiyu and umbaadyu at the many dhabas on the Surat-Navsari highway. Surti ghaari, a sinful dessert, is best savoured at Babubhai 24 Carats and Adarsh Sweets in Bhagal. Indulge in street foods like surti locho and egg ghotalo at Kamrej Chowk, Magdalla and Bhatar Lane or dig into a sumptuous, 200-dish Gujarati Thaali at Piccolo restaurant. For world cuisine restaurants, visit Wok on Fire at Parle Point and Golden Dragon at Rangila Parle for Asian food. Leonardo Italiano Ristorante at Piplod, Level 5 cafe on Dumas Road and Cafe Piano at Magdalla Circle are perfect for an Italian fare.

Other attractions: During these nine festive days, witness the Tippani dance, a fascinating form of garba unique to the tribal Dang community and Sheri garba—the oldest form of garba—in the old city areas of Bhagal, Lal Darwaja and Nanpura.

PHOTO COURTESY : AVIK PAUL





AHMEDABAD

During Navratri, the days may be quiet in Ahmedabad, but as soon as the sun sets, the city is lit up and abuzz with festivities. And almost everyone on the streets is seen heading to a nearby garba ground.

Where to dance: The sombre *teen-taali garba*, danced to Maa Amba's devotional tunes at Bhadra Fort, Manek Chowk, Dhal Ni Pole and Thaltej Tekri, is a must-try. The National Institute of Design's garba event blends folk and Bollywood numbers, while the state government sponsored Navratri event on the GMDC Grounds include a garba, a fun-fair and an exhibition of handloom and other crafts. But Navratri Sports Club's garba gets top-of-the-line performers to entertain crowds. Daily passes can be booked through www.bookmyshow.com

Stars to watch: The city attracts top brass garba stars like Shyamal-Saumil, Falguni Pathak, Parthiv Gohil, Mahesh-Naresh Kanoria, Priti-Pinki and Devang Patel who regale their audiences. Not to mention Bollywood A-listers who make appearances at venues like Karnavati Club, Rajpath Club and YMCA Club on the Sarkhej-Gandhinagar Highway.

Garba garb: For handmade, ethnic garba outfits embellished with Kutchi-embroidery and *aabhla* (mirror work) head to the handicraft stalls along Law Garden. Check out Bhujodi Art & Craft Emporium at Mithakali for designer-wear in block prints, baandhni and patola, along with silver and agate ornaments. The festive creations of Shyamal and Bhumika at Mithakali or Darshi Shah and Bhavin Trivedi's Studio in Vastrapur are head turners. You may also want to scout the shops at Dhalgalwad and Relief Road for bargain buys.

Feast away: Treat yourself to khaman-dhokla, pao-bhaji, khandvi and other savoury treats at Manek Chowk and Kankaria. Try a full-spread Gujarati Thaali with a view of Ahmedabad's skyline at Patang, the revolving restaurant. Dine at the boutique heritage haveli-turned-restaurant, Agashiye – The House of MG at Lal Darwaja. A midnight stroll binging on milkshakes and masala pulao at Sabarmati riverfront, or a super early morning breakfast at Courtyard Marriot is highly recommended. Both offer a



PHOTO COURTESY: NILESH BRAHMBHATT

rare opportunity to see Ahmedabad at its liveliest. The Grand Bhagwati hosts a special all-vegetarian buffet and combo meals for those observing the Navratri fast. Meat cravings can be satiated with Parsi preparations at Hotel Cama near Nehru Bridge or at one of the many food stalls in Bhatiyar Galli.

Other attractions: There are art shows at Gufaa Art Gallery and dance performances at Mallika Sarabhai's Darpana Academy of Performing Art to keep you entertained during your stay in Ahmedabad.

Navratri Dates: October 13 to October 22, 2015

To organise custom-made tour packages in Gujarat, visit www.gujarattourism.com



PHOTOGRAPHS: JULIEN CAPMEL; SHUTTERSTOCK

Wear to go

Your style guide ★ The world in watches ★ Pearls for the season

ISTANBUL'S BEST BOUTIQUES

From perfumeries to concept stores and everything in between, **Nina Ludolphi** tells you where you should be shopping in this historic city

Located on two continents, between two seas, and the capital of several empires throughout its history, Istanbul was destined to be a hotspot for merchants, manufacturers and artisans from all over the region, many of whom settled in and around the Grand Bazaar. Built in the 15th century and called the world's first mall, it still draws more than 90 million visitors annually and is seen as the quintessential shopping experience for travellers. But I did not go until my third year here, and by exploring the city my own way, I acquired a very different perspective on the perfect Istanbul souvenir. Yes, carpets and metal lanterns with stained glass are typically

Turkish, but there's so much more on offer, from jewellery and graphic-printed scarves to professional-grade copperware and ceramic sculptures. Be it the trendy district of Beyoğlu or the quieter neighbourhood of Moda on the Asian side, Istanbul is bursting with concept stores, boutiques and artisans whose craft reflects Turkey's transition from a manufacturing base to a hub of creativity and innovation rooted in tradition. To help you navigate this labyrinth, here is a list of the city's finest shops and brands sorted by neighbourhood.



NIŞANTAŞI A high-fashion district on the European side **Fey**

The owner, Fatoş Yalın, earlier worked at *Marie Claire*, Turkey, and her boutique is a beacon of effortless ladylike style. Don't leave without one of Yalın's handpicked super-glam accessories. (www.fey.com.tr; from TRY150 or ₺3,700)

Gönül Paksoy

With her intellectual approach to fashion, hand-dyed silk and history-conscious designs, author, artist and fashion designer Gönül Paksoy creates wearable art. Many of the garments exclusively available at her Istanbul showroom are actually produced from antique Ottoman fabrics. Clad yourself in an authentic piece of old Turkey with one of her dramatic kaftans. (+90 212 236 02 09; from TRY100 or ₺2,450)

Tohum

The darling of Istanbul's fashionistas, Verda Alaton of Tohum makes ethnic-inspired, handmade jewellery that adds a bohemian touch to even the simplest outfits. From gold-encapsulated plant materials to pearls and crystals, each piece is unique. Buy one of her voluminous bracelets for an easy-to-wear statement piece. (www.tohumdesign.com; from TRY495 or ₺12,100)

Urat

Inspired by archaeological artefacts, Urat's handmade gold jewellery is truly special. From the mystical



1 A Rumisu scarf

2 The founders of Rumisu 3 Earrings from Urat 4 An ensemble at Fey 5 The interiors of Cashmere In Love 6 Cushions at Yastık by Rifat Özbek. Previous pages, from left: Serdar-i-Ekram, a trendy street; Istanbul's Blue Mosque

symbolism of ancient Anatolian civilisations to Ottoman splendour, these creations celebrate Turkish heritage in the most bedazzling way possible. Must-buy: dangling earrings that make you feel as beautiful as Diane Kruger playing Helen of Troy. (www.urat.com.tr; from TRY350 or ₺8,600)

Yastık by Rifat Özbek

The Ottoman emperors contributed a great deal to the art of lounging, and this store pays homage to them with its luxurious, colourful cushions. The all-white store has an entire library of multi-coloured pieces, from Anatolian patterns to modern prints. I'm partial to everything ikat, so I'd recommend you buy a lovely silk pillow in this delicate weave. (+90 212 240 87 31; from TRY225 or ₺5,460)



BEBEK An upscale area by the Bosphorus, teeming with new shops **Midnight Express**

Run by an architect and a fashion designer with impeccable taste, this concept store is one of the best places to discover hot local designers, and is a reliable source of ready-to-wear accessories and design objects. My favourite is a printed scarf from Rumisu, an Istanbul label that has been featured in several international fashion magazines. (www.midnightexpress.com.tr; from TRY50 or ₺1,200) →



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Cashmere in Love

The clothes you'll find here are so soft that you'll never want to take them off. Designer Esra Bezek draws inspiration from her trips around the world and turns this into refreshingly minimalist designs, with nice touches like custom-made beads. Buy a featherweight silk and cashmere top for comfort in any climate. (www.cashmereinlove.com; from TRY390 or ₹9,550)

Mehry Mu

Perfumer Jo Malone is a big fan of Güneş Mutlu's chic bags and clutches that combine Islamic traditional motifs with contemporary leather designs. I love the ikat clutches, but I think the new leather belt bags are an absolute must-have! (www.mehrymu.com; from TRY290 or ₹7,100)

Simple Life

Eclectic dinnerware and delicate glassware, handmade by local artisans, compete for your attention with gorgeously soft bathrobes, scented candles, and other home accessories. Must-buy: exquisite tea glasses with colourful detailing. (www.simplelifehome.com; from TRY8 or ₹200)

NURUOSMANIYE Situated right by the Grand Bazaar, it's home to lovely speciality stores

Armaggan

From naturally dyed textiles to mesmerising jewellery and objets d'art, Armaggan's handmade creations are the antithesis of mass production. Anatolian patterns form the base for modern Turkish design with a strong sense of the unusual. If you are not one to splurge on gems and gold, why not take home an Aznavur silver tray for a touch of Ottoman grandeur? (www.armaggan.com; price on request)

Abdulla Natural Products

Creamy soaps and soft pestemals (Turkish towels) are the highlights at this bath and home products store. True to its name, Abdulla sells



1 Wooden slippers at **Abdulla Natural Products** **2** Inside **Simple Life** **3** A blouse from **Armaggan** **4** a belt bag from **Mehry Mu** **5** scented room spray at **Lokum Istanbul**

only products manufactured from natural materials. I carry one of these luxurious lightweight towels with me whenever I travel. (www.abdulla.com; from TRY12 or ₹300)

BEYOĞLU The heart of Istanbul, thrumming with bars, restaurants, galleries and shops

Üç Yıldız Şekerlemecisi

A Beyoğlu institution for the last 90 years, this is a must for anyone craving sweets and nostalgia. Old-fashioned jars of colourful hard candies line the shelves, and near-antique metal canisters are used to store dry goods. The rose petal jam is an acquired taste, but oh so delicious on crisp toast! (www.ucyildizsekerleme.com; from TRY6 or ₹150)

Souq

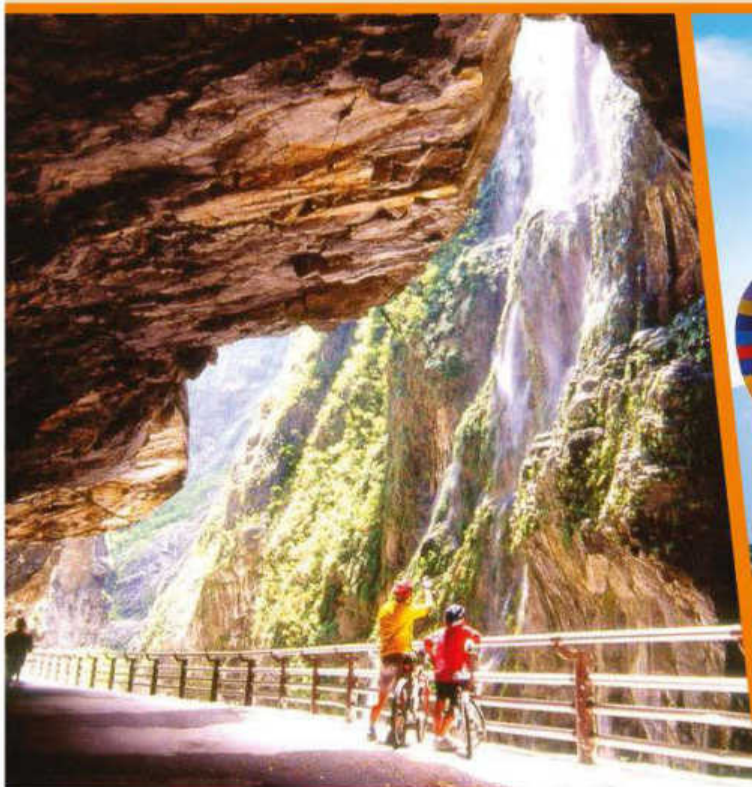
This Sunday market with changing themes started as a monthly pop-up event, but is now a lovingly curated mini-bazaar full of surprises—think Etsy in real life. This is a great place to spot up-and-coming designers and small brands. Anything you buy here, from fashion editors' vintage clothes to handcrafted →



Fun in
Taiwan



Taiwan
THE HEART OF ASIA



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objects, is an Istanbul original. I dare you to leave with only one item. (www.souqkarakoy.com; prices vary)

Mae Zae

At this concept store, you'll find everything from hip accessories to vintage home décor. International brands rub shoulders with local designers, creating an array of merchandise reminiscent of a perfectly curated home. Check out the shark-tooth bracelets and necklaces with insect-shaped charms, both by a local designer called der-liebling. (www.maezae.com; from TRY10 or ₹250)

Ark of Crafts

Situated on top of Adahan, an environmentally friendly hotel in Asmalimescit, Ark of Crafts sells traditionally handcrafted products. You'll find ceramics, carpets and modern Turkish design objects. The displays are often updated, but the artisanal ceramic plates are a perennial favourite. (www.arkofcrafts.com; from TRY35 or ₹850)

Nyks

This tiny corner store in Galata's hip Serdar-ı Ekrem Sokak street sells candles made from organic olive oil and scented with natural essences. The paraffin-free wax is filled into beautifully handcrafted glass, brass, or marble containers. The rosemary candle smells heavenly. (www.nyks.com.tr; from TRY55 or ₹1,350)



- 1 Emir Ali Enç of Soy
- 2 A miniature at Ark of Crafts
- 3 The eau de parfum collection at Atelier Rebul
- 4 candles at Nyks

is always crowded with people queuing for their neatly wrapped packages. A great souvenir for your coffee-loving friends back home. (www.mehmetefendi.com; from TRY2 or ₹50)

Soy

Chefs flock to Emir Ali Enç's shop for his handcrafted professional-grade copper kitchenware. His beautifully hammered pots and pans, produced by the artisans of the Grand Bazaar, come with a lifetime guarantee.

The copper cezve (coffee pot) is small enough to fit in your suitcase. (www.soy.com.tr; from TRY200 or ₹4,900)

Atelier Rebul

A crisp waft of cologne is the trademark of any true Istanbulite, and Atelier Rebul's essences are the city's favourites.

Freshen up with a whiff of green tea or tangerine. Or buy the Istanbul signature scent, with notes of Turkish rose, available in the form of eau de parfum, diffusers and candles. (www.atelierrebul.com; from TRY32 or ₹800)



OTHERS

Lokum Istanbul

Located in Kuruçesme, it specialises in the famous Turkish confections that come in an endless variety of flavours and colours. A range of room fragrances and candles completes the collection, all wrapped in their signature packaging, with sophisticated toile motifs and black pompom edging. My top recommendation would be the fez-shaped lokum gift box, an original and sweet way to say "From Istanbul with love". (www.lokumistanbul.com; from TRY10 or ₹250)

Kurukahveci Mehmet Efendi

Approaching its 145th year in business, Istanbul's biggest and (rightfully) most popular purveyor of Turkish coffee is hard to miss. The shop in Eminönü, redolent with the aroma of fresh coffee grounds,



An Australian Escape

Pristine beaches, alluring landscapes and the Great Barrier Reef are what come to mind when one mentions Queensland. However, there is more to the Sunshine State than meets the eye

Whether it's romantic getaways or high-octane adventures, Queensland makes for an unforgettable Diwali or Christmas vacation. And, with Singapore Airlines offering special airfares (details below) from India to Brisbane, a Queensland holiday becomes an even more exciting proposition. Here's your **top 10 picks** of what to do when in Queensland.

1 INTO THE BLUE

The Great Barrier Reef is not just the world's largest coral formation, it's also one of the world's most marine rich zones—think manta rays, sea turtles and whales. Dive, snorkel or indulge in various other water sport activities and uncover the Great Barrier Reef.



2 PARADISE FOUND

Discover rare and endangered animals like the southern cassowary in their natural habitat with special treks through the exotic Daintree Rainforest.



3 LODGED IN LUXURY

Stay amidst white sandy beaches at Lizard Island, majestic mountains at Spicers Peak Lodge, or any other property by the Luxury Lodges of Australia. Each location offers a perfect blend of luxury accommodation and spa facilities.

4 PUMP IT UP

Zip line at Cape Tribulation, bungee jump at AJ Hackett Cairns or get a bird's eye view of the Great Barrier Reef by skydiving at Cairns.

5 ZOO LAND

Feed kangaroos, cuddle koalas and see crocodiles at the world-famous Crocoseum at the Australia Zoo.

6 LOVE IS IN THE AIR

Take a romantic seaplane ride over the Heart Reef—a stunning coral composition in a heart shape—a site for many proposals over the years. Or, enjoy a private picnic for two on Hayman or Hamilton Island.



7 FLIPPER'S PLAYGROUND

While in Queensland visit the Tangalooma Wild Dolphin Resort to get up close and personal with dolphins and indulge in other water activities like kayaking and parasailing.

8 UP AND AWAY

Watch the sun rise over the scenic tablelands at Cairns or see it peek out of the Gold Coast's rolling hills in a hot air balloon.

9 MEET MIGALOO

Look out for Migaloo, the world's only all-white humpback whale while the whales migrate to the Queensland shore from June to November.



10 JUST WHAT THE KIDS ORDERED

With cartoon characters like Bugs Bunny and Scooby Doo at Warner Bros. Movie World, exotic animals at Sea World and theme parks like Dreamworld, your children are bound to have a blast on the Gold Coast.



Fly to Singapore with Singapore Airlines that offers 53 weekly flights to the city. Travel onwards with 21 weekly connections to Brisbane and three weekly connections (via SilkAir) to Cairns. For more information, visit www.singaporeair.com

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All-in fare to Brisbane and Cairns are priced at ₹60,000 onwards for a minimum of two passengers travelling together. Sale period starts from 16 July to 31 August 2015 for travel from 1 August 2015 to 31 March 2016. Promotional fares are valid from Mumbai, New Delhi,

Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru and Chennai.

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From Brazil to Japan, Morocco to Tahiti, with stopovers in New York, Paris, Rome and Sydney, we take you on a tour of the globe with the timepieces that have caught our fancy this year. By **Prasad Ramamurthy**

Wear to go

Syria



Check out the dial of the **Cartier d'Art Ronde de Cartier Damascened Panther Décor (1)**. It's inspired by the mastery of traditional artisans in Damascus and their ability to craft stunning objects from gold.



Tunisia



The **Ulysse Nardin Hannibal Minute Repeater (2)** pays homage to the Carthaginian general Hannibal, who crossed the Pyrenees and Alps in 218BC, elephants in tow, to win Rome.



Morocco

James Bond will return to the screen in *Spectre*. The film, out in November, will see actor Daniel Craig chasing baddies in Tangier, Oujda and Erfoud with a limited-edition **OMEGA Seamaster Aqua Terra (3)** strapped to his wrist.



Switzerland

This country is not just the epicentre of watchmaking, but is also an inspiration to watchmakers. **Victorinox** has upcycled Swiss Army leather bags to create the casing and strap of the **I.N.O.X. (4)**, while **Carl F. Bucherer's Patravi TravelTec II (5)** specially marks out Lucerne on its case back. And **Tissot's** nautical blue **Quickster Lugano (6)** takes its name from the lake in southern Switzerland.



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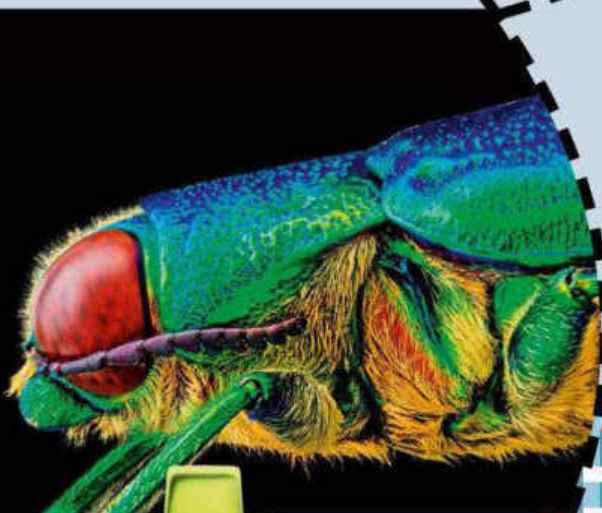


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UK

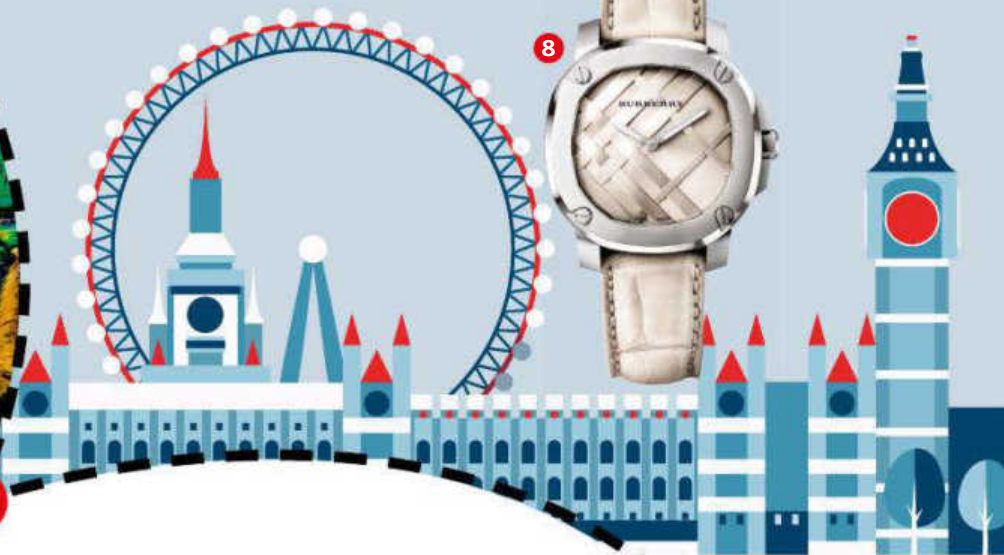
The capital city of London offers a range of leisure activities—from sporting events to shopping and feasting at Borough Market and the Notting Hill Carnival (30—31 August). The bright green of the **Rado HyperChrome Court (7)** is a nod to grass courts like those of Wimbledon, while **The Britain (8)**, with **Burberry's** trademark checks on its dial, doffs a hat to all things English.



Indonesia



Scarab beetles are considered auspicious in many Asian and Arab cultures and have been used in jewellery since the days of the pharaohs. Each dial of the **Dior VIII Grand Bal Pièce Unique Envol N°5 (9)** uses the harvested shells of 60 *chrysochroa fulminans* scarab beetles, found in the jungles of East Java.



Japan



The ancient Japanese art of painting on porcelain, Aka-e, can be seen on the dial of the **Slim d'Hermes Koma Kurabe (10)**. Interestingly, Koma Kurabe is the name of a Shinto equestrian ritual. The race depicted on this watch takes place at the Kamigamo shrine in Kyoto.

India

The country has, over the centuries, inspired countless artists and adventurers; how could watchmakers be far behind? Lord Ganesha adorns the dial of **Blancpain's Les Métiers d'Art Shakudō (11)**; the word shakudō refers to an alloy of copper and gold. Two craft forms—plumasserie and marquetry—have been used to reconstruct a peacock feather from individual fibres on the dial of **Corum's Feather Watch (12)**. **Harry Winston's Premier Shinde Automatic (13)** uses a traditional Indian pattern by the late Ambaji Shinde, one of the brand's star designers. And the **Montblanc Collection Villeret Tourbillon Cylindrique Geospheres Vasco da Gama (14)** celebrates the Portuguese explorer, who arrived in Calicut in 1498.



11



12



13



14



Tahiti

Naples meets Tahiti in the **Reine de Naples Haute Joaillerie 8909 (15)**, a new timepiece by **Breguet**, which uses lustrous mother-of-pearl sourced from the Polynesian island. The watch is part of a collection named after former Neapolitan Queen Caroline Murat, Napoleon Bonaparte's sister and a major Breguet patron (along with Alexander I, the czar of Russia, and Ottoman Sultan Selim III). She commissioned the first wristwatch ever made by the brand, way back in 1810.



15

Italy

This Mediterranean nation has inspired a number of watchmakers with its art, architecture and fashion. **Ferragamo's** trademark Vara bow, emblematic of the Italian sense of style, is seen in the **Varina (16)**. The influence of European Renaissance architecture, as seen in structures like the Palazzo dei Diamanti in northern Italy, has given **Gucci's Diamantissima (17)** its striking case. Central Rome's paved streets (sanpietrini) give **Chopard's La Strada (18)** its characteristic structure, while **Panerai's Radiomir Firenze 3 Days Acciaio (19)** has the Florentine lily, a recurring motif in Roman architecture, engraved on its side. On the caseback of the **LANGE 1 TIME ZONE (20)**, German watchmaker **A. Lange & Söhne** has engraved the coat of arms of The Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este vintage car rally, which is held on the banks of Lake Como. And Swiss watchmaker **Breitling's Chronomat Airborne (21)** is the latest in a series first made in 1983 for the Italian Air Force's acrobatics team.



16



18



17



19



20



21



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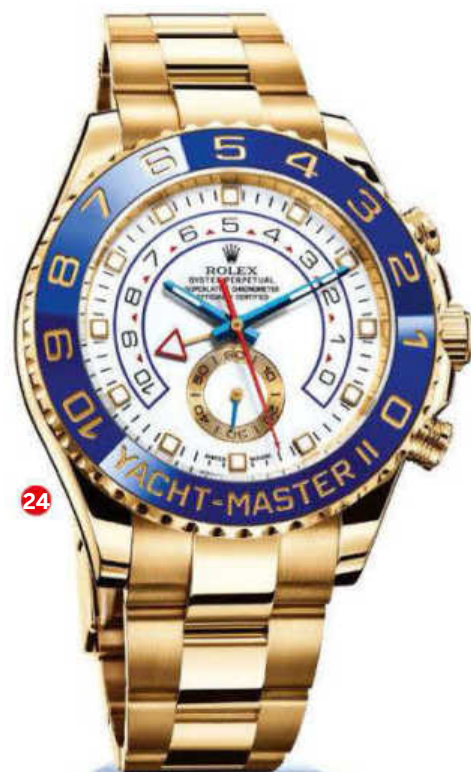
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China

When you think of China, economic might and dizzying skyscrapers come to mind. But it is still rooted in tradition, and watchmakers realise this. The fish painted on the dial of **Jaquet Droz's Petite Heure Minute Relief Carps (22)** symbolise longevity, perseverance, love and virility. And the **Piaget Protocole XXL Micro-Mosaic (23)** features a pagoda from Yunnan.



Australia

The land down under has attracted sporty sorts for a while now—be it for sailing, cricket or horse racing. **Rolex**, which crafts sailing timepieces such as the **Yacht-Master II (24)**, sponsors the Sydney Hobart Yacht Race, one of the city's big annual sailing competitions. Professional teams race from Sydney Harbour to Hobart in Tasmania. And **Longines**, which uses stirrup-esque elements in timepieces, like **The Longines Equestrian Collection (25)**, co-sponsors the Emirates Melbourne Cup Day, the principal event of the racing season.



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PRESENTS

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DREAM DISCOVER EXPLORE THR

A photograph of a man looking out from a train window, with the train's exterior and tracks visible in the background.

UNFOLDING IN OUR 5TH ANNIVERSARY INDIA SPECIAL

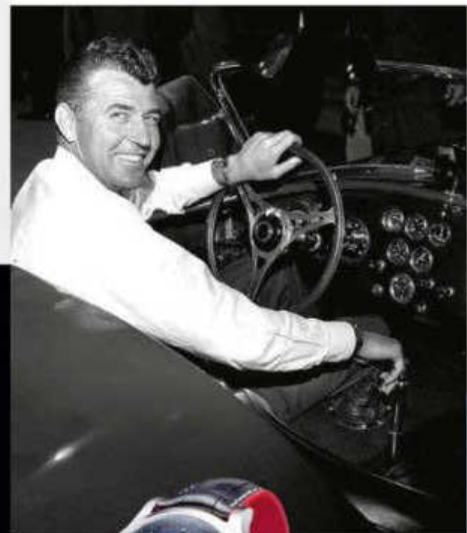
ON STANDS OCTOBER 2015

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID CROOKES

ILL LEARN INSPIRE CELEBRATE

USA

The Land of the Free is also the land of inspiration. **Calvin Klein Spellbound (26)** found it in the animal prints seen on NYC's runways. **Audemars Piguet** delved into fashion history to create the **Diamond Punk (27)**, based on the punk rock movement that was born in 1970s NYC. **Baume & Mercier's Capeland Shelby Cobra (28)** celebrates race car builder Carroll Shelby's Daytona-defining, NASCAR-changing designs.



France

The world of arts and crafts, especially of the très chic kind, have long been influenced by all things Français. French embroidery gets a nod in the dial of **Chanel's Mademoiselle Privé (29)**. Swarovski has teamed up with Tunisian-French designer Shourouk Rhaïem to create **Swarovski by Shourouk (30)**, inspired by Parisian Art Deco. Swiss brand **IWC Schaffhausen**, meanwhile, has taken the literary route. The **Pilot's Watch Double Chronograph Edition "Le Petit Prince" (31)** features characters from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's beloved book on its reverse.



PHOTOGRAPHS: WALTER ZERLA/CORBIS; EGON GADE/
GALLERY STOCK; ALAMY; GETTY IMAGES
ILLUSTRATION: SHUTTERSTOCK

Portugal

To honour footballer Cristiano Ronaldo, who plays for the national football team, watchmaker **TAG Heuer** has created the **Formula 1 Cristiano Ronaldo (32)**.

The dial of the timepiece carries the superstar's initials and his jersey number, 7.



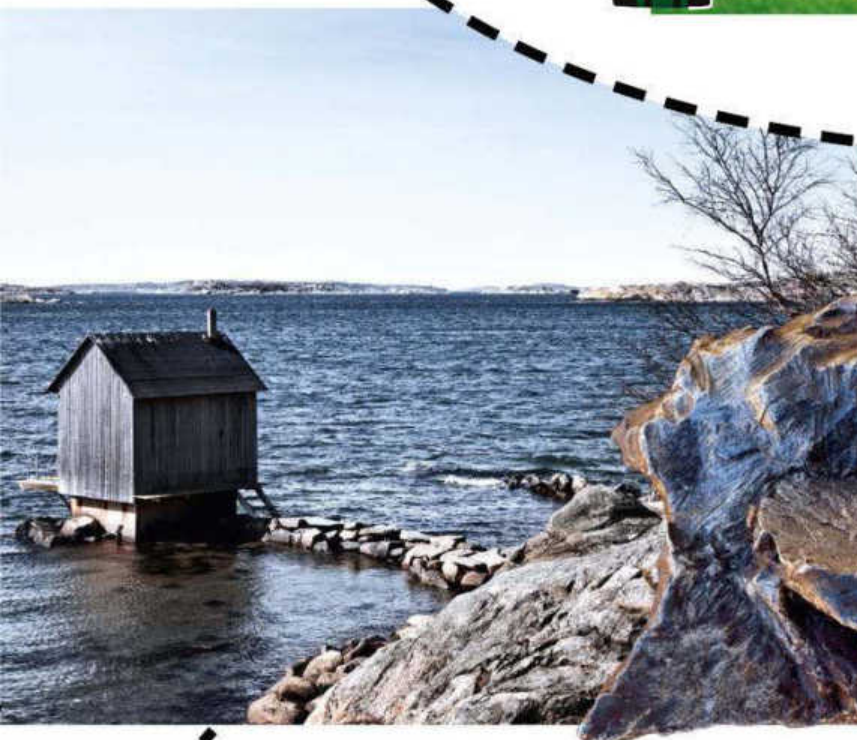
32



Sweden

Every year, hundreds of meteors crash and burn in Earth's atmosphere. The ones that make it through (meteorites) lodge themselves deep within the planet's crust. A chip off one such block of stone, mined from the Swedish village of Kitkiojarvi, is used to form the dial of the **Jaeger-LeCoultre Master Calendar (33)**.

33

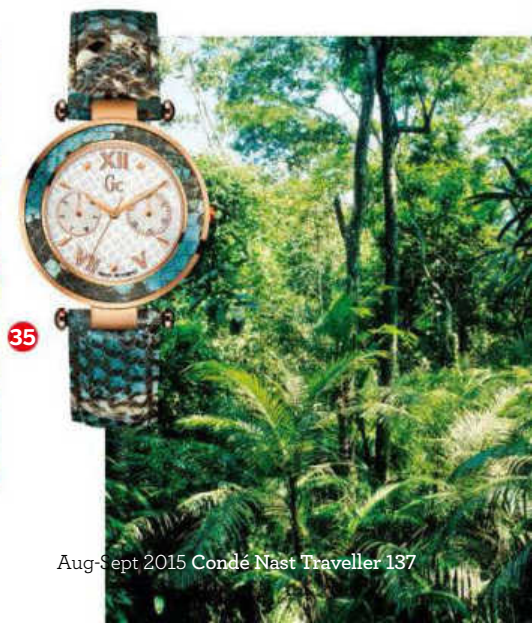


Brazil

The ecological and cultural diversity of this nation is reflected in two watches. The dial of the **Hublot Classic Fusion Enamel Britto (34)** is inspired by the work of neo-pop artist Romero Britto. And the reptiles of the Amazon rainforest are reflected in the **Gc LadyChic Turquoise Python (35)**.



34



35

Greece

Vacheron Constantin's **Metiers d'Art Mekaniques Gravees (36)** takes its cue from classic Greek architecture. The acanthus leaf seen on the dial was a favourite decorative motif of the Greeks and is seen on many Corinthian columns.



Belgium

Vanitas (37), the OTT watch collection by fashion label **Versace**, is also the name of an art form that emerged from Flanders, back in the 16th and 17th centuries. The use of black and gold in the timepiece are a nod to their use in the still-life paintings created by masters such as Antonio de Pereda.



Turkey

Back in the 1880s, when Constantinople, today's Istanbul, was a buzzing centre of commerce, **Zenith** made pocketwatches specifically for the city's well-heeled traveller. Inspired by those, the brand has now created the **El Primero Winsor Annual Calendar (38)**.



Venezuela

Watchmakers find inspiration in all sorts of places. The bird seen on the dial of the **Il Giardino Tropicale di Bulgari (39)** watch is native to nations like Venezuela.



Egypt

The zig zag pattern made famous by energy company Chevron was popular in Ottoman and Byzantine architecture. It is visible in monuments like the 15th-century Mosque of Sultan al Muayyad in Cairo. Now the pattern dials up the glamour of the **Louis Vuitton Joaillerie Chevron Noire (40)**.



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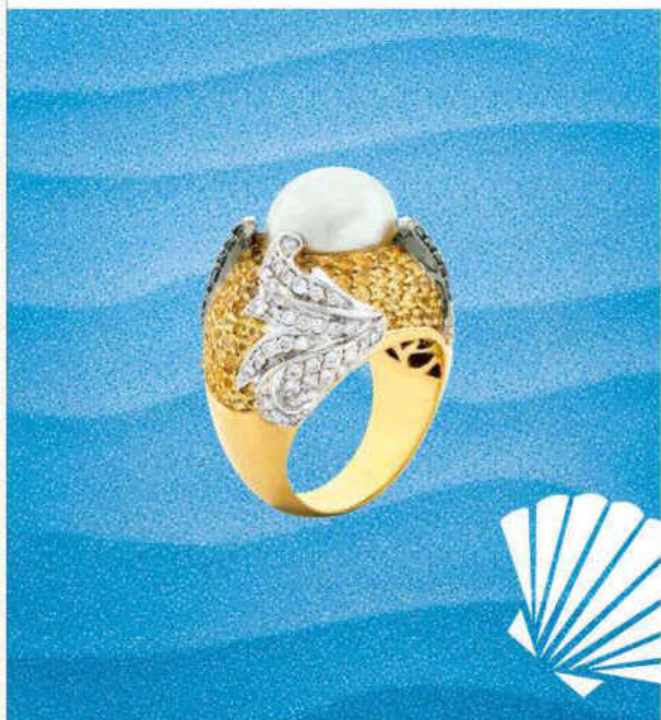
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PEARL OF THE OCEAN

Subtle or bold, pearls are the classic travel companion



Clockwise from top left: Earrings crafted in 18ct gold and set with South Sea pearls and brilliant round diamonds, **Anmol Jewellers**; Pearl and diamond ring crafted in a sleek contemporary style in 18ct white gold, **Diacolor**; Floral earrings crafted in 22ct gold with a pearl drop, **Azva**; Floral-motif ring from the 'Colours of Life' collection, **Rose**. All prices on request.

See Directory, p224

Dressed to Impress – GQ celebrated the country's most dapper men – with **GQ BEST DRESSED MEN 2015**

The Four Seasons red carpet was a hotbed of style. It was the most straight-up glamorous evening of the year with India's most stylish men and hottest women dressed to their best. Not to mention, it was one epic party with flowing cocktails & rocking tunes.



Akshay Kumar & Che Kurrien

GQ BEST DRESSED MEN 2015

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Shruti Haasan



Kalyani Chawla



Purna Goel



Arjun Kapoor receives a Rado timepiece from Simran Chandhoke & Che Kurrien



Nimrat Kaur



Kabir Bedi



The Grey Goose Bar



Divya Jyoti



Poorna Jagannathan



Dino Morea

Pernia Qureshi



Vijay Subramaniam



Vartika Singh & Aafreen Vaz



Bose Krishnamachari & Oona Dhabhar



AD Singh



Anshuman Goenka



Rajkumar Rao sports a sleek Rado watch



Sunil Sethi & Vikram Raizada in conversation at the Van Heusen booth



Bimalendu Tarafdar



Ali Fazal



Huma Qureshi



Mandira Bedi



Hat, **Roxy**, ₹1,500

WHAT TO PACK

Who says you need to forgo style in the wild outdoors? We list the coolest gear for your trip



Quilted waistcoat jacket, **Corneliani**, ₹48,000



T-shirt, **GANT**, ₹5,000



Trousers, **GAS**, ₹5,000



Assembling a tent on a lakeside camping trip



Travelite 2014 sleeping bag, **Wildcraft**, ₹1,300

ADVENTURE



Calf Leather Buckley Back Pack, **TOM FORD**



Shoes, **DC**, ₹6,000

Leather wallet, **Tod's**



Jacket, **Quiksilver**, ₹4,500

GLAMPING ESSENTIALS

Want to go on an adventure trip but can't do without your creature comforts? Here are a few you can carry along to the campsite

Helio Pressure Shower, **NEMO Equipment, Inc.**, ₹6,400



Sun King Pro All Night, **Greenlight Planet.**, ₹1,800



Handpresso Pump, **Handpresso.**, ₹7,150



All prices on request, unless stated. See Directory, p224

A hiker on a rocky ridge in Alaska



Equestrian print scarf, **Gucci**



Pendleton collection hoodie, **Roxy**, ₹4,600



Calla Dark Tortoise sunglasses, **Louis Vuitton**



Sleeveless t-shirt, **Diesel**, ₹9,000



Jacquard shorts, **Tommy Hilfiger**, ₹4,000



Citronella oil, **Kama Ayurveda**, ₹350 (12ml)



Very High Sun Protection Cream, **Shiseido**, ₹2,400



Lydie Hala sandals, **Clarks**, ₹5,500



Beach bag in cotton, **Hermès**





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August

From indie music in Arunachal Pradesh to legendary rock stars in



A recital at the 2006 edition of the Young Euro Classic in Berlin.

Opposite: members of Tetseo Sisters, a Nagaland band that performed at Ziro in 2014

6 AUG

WHERE Singapore

WHAT This year, the theme of the **Singapore International Festival of Arts** is POST—Empires. It explores ideas of power, colonialism, dictatorship and neo-liberal capitalism. (www.sifa.sg)

WHEN 6 August—19 September

CNT TIP Grab a bite at Toast Box, a hawker centre at Bayfront Avenue at Marina Bay Sands.

8 AUG

WHERE Berlin

WHAT Watch youth orchestras from countries such as China, Ukraine, Turkey and Romania at the **Young Euro Classic**. (www.young-euro-classic.de)

WHEN 6—23 August

CNT TIP If there's one show you shouldn't miss, it's the fusion of Vivaldi with Metallica, Muse, Pink Floyd and Dream Theater on 8 August.

10 AUG

WHERE Pesaro, Italy

WHAT Enjoy the works of Rossini, Foppa, Palomba and more, at the **Rossini Opera Festival**, in the historic 19th-century Teatro Rossini. (www.rossinioperafestival.it)

WHEN 10—22 August

CNT TIP Browse the 700-year old collections of majolica ceramics at the Musei Civici in Pesaro.

26 AUG

WHERE Buñol, Spain

WHAT One of the world's most popular food fights, **La Tomatina** attracts around 22,000 visitors annually. (www.latomatina.org)

WHEN 26 August

CNT TIP Tour operator First Festival Travel (www.firstfestivaltravel.com) offers festival packages that include stay and transfers.

September

Rio de Janeiro, here's our pick of **what not to miss** this season

4 SEPT

WHERE Sussex
WHAT Since it was started in 1996, the non-profit **September Art Exhibition** has become a popular event. It's a great platform for up-and-coming artists. (www.septemberart.org)
WHEN 4—13 September
CNT TIP Make a trip to the Bolney Wine Estate for a taste of English sparkling wines.

18 SEPT

WHERE New York
WHAT The **Coney Island Film Festival** has become a fixture in New Yorkers' calendar, screening eclectic films from all over the world. The shows by burlesque stars are a huge hit. (www.coneyislandfilmfestival.com)
WHEN 18—20 September
CNT TIP Grab a hot dog at the aptly named Nathan's Famous.

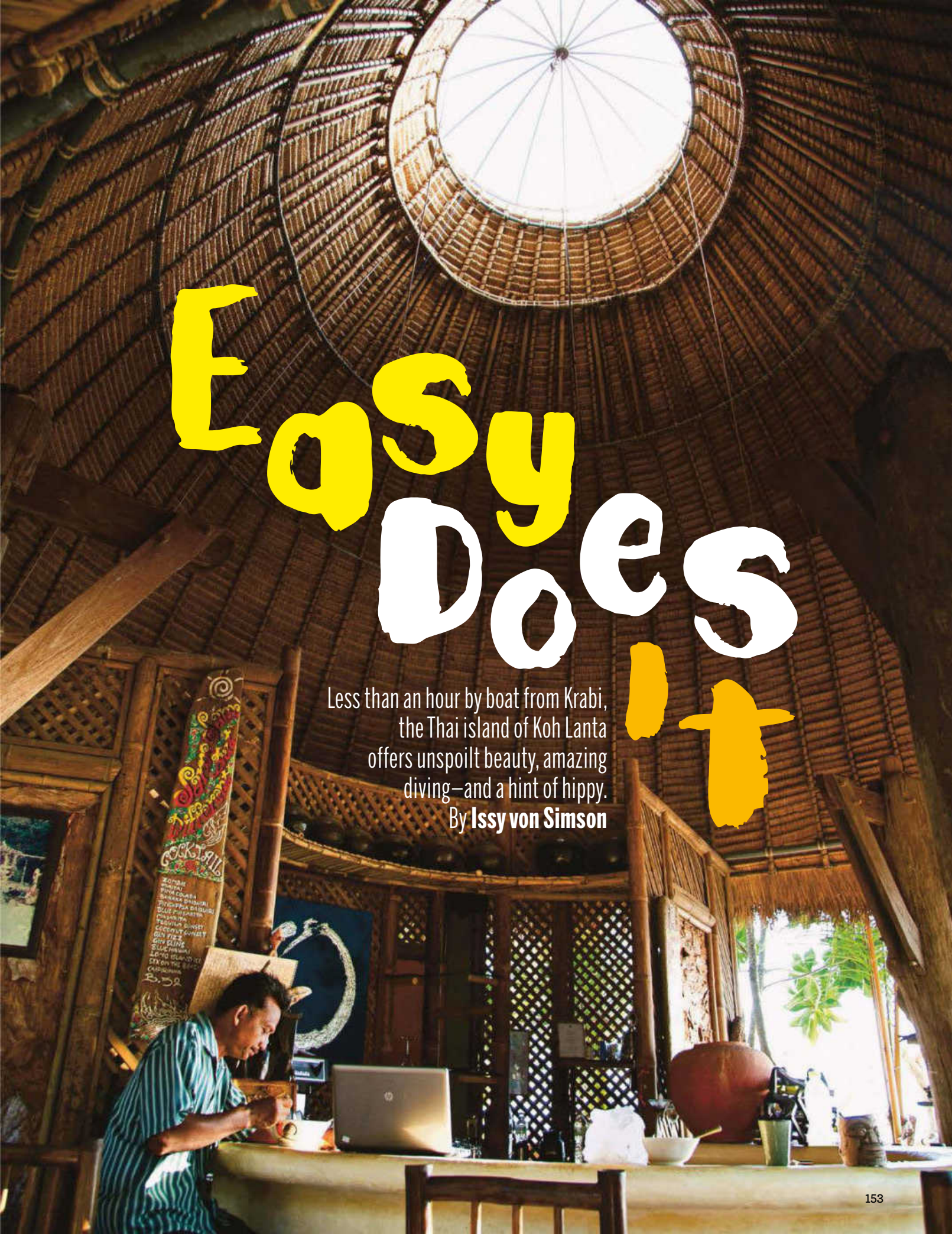
19 SEPT

WHERE Rio de Janeiro
WHAT One of the biggest celebrations of rock music in the world, **Rock in Rio** has heavyweights such as Rihanna, Slipknot, Elton John and OneRepublic lined up this year. (www.rockinrio.com)
WHEN 18—27 September
CNT TIP Don't miss heavy metal kings Metallica on 19 September.

24 SEPT

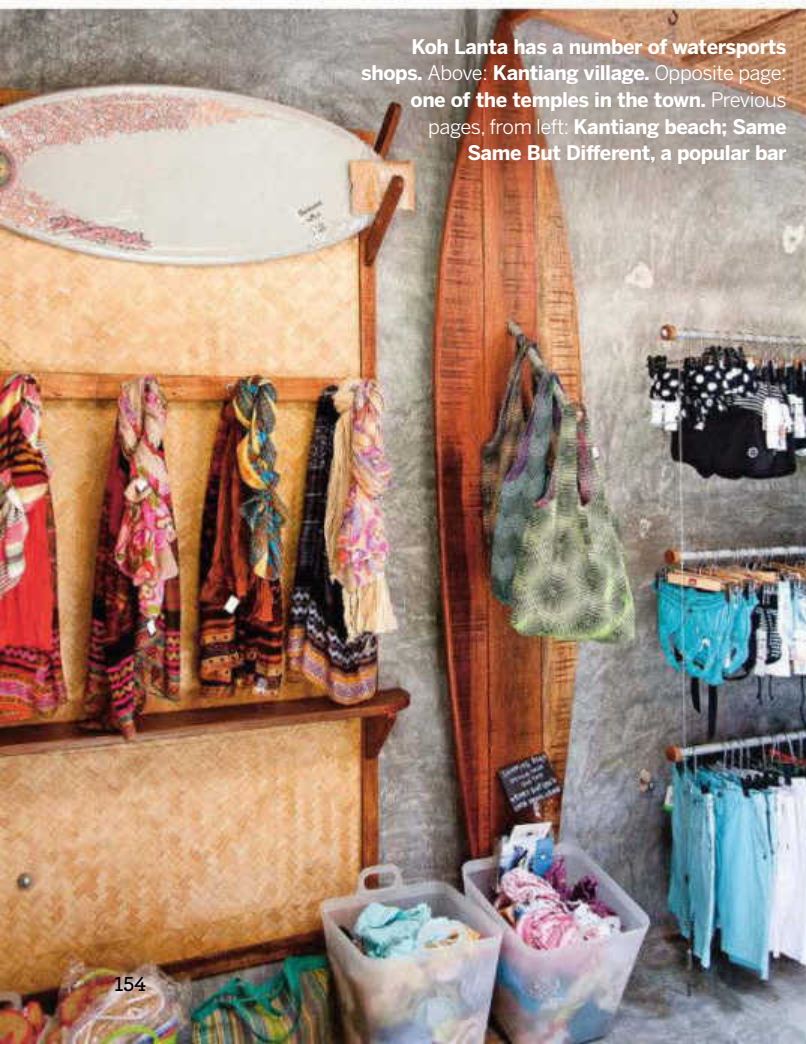
WHERE Arunachal Pradesh
WHAT The **Ziro Festival of Music** has hosted indie rock and folk acts like Indus Creed, Prateek Kuhad, Ganesh Talkies and more. (www.zirofestival.com)
WHEN 24—27 September
CNT TIP Apart from the festival's camping facilities, Ziro has limited stay options, so book early to avoid the rush.





Easy Does It

Less than an hour by boat from Krabi,
the Thai island of Koh Lanta
offers unspoilt beauty, amazing
diving—and a hint of hippy.
By **Issy von Simson**



Koh Lanta has a number of watersports shops. Above: Kantiang village. Opposite page: one of the temples in the town. Previous pages, from left: Kantiang beach; Same Same But Different, a popular bar

No one in Bangkok will believe you are going to Koh Lanta. “Oooh,” taxi drivers will shake their heads, “why you wanna go there for?” Hotel doormen will doff their caps and smile. “Have good time Samui.” Porters on the shiny concourse at Suvarnabhumi Airport will wink. “You go party Phuket?” And at Krabi Airport, you’re likely to be among the few taking the road south rather than west to the limestone-cragged postcard beaches of Railay and Ao Nang. Onwards you’ll trundle, down dual carriageways, past trucks piled high with spiky pineapples and knobbly jackfruit, onto heaving car ferries. Then the island itself, a single-track road, driving through low, shrubby palm groves, getting further and further away from the noise and the bright lights with every twist and curve. And that, there, is precisely the point.

It’s not as if Lanta is some hidden paradise, an untouched secret where none but the most intrepid backpacker has ever set foot. In fact, it’s quite big. Lanta Yai, the main island (there are more than 50 little ones in the archipelago, protected by a marine park), is 30km long, with a sandy fringe all along the west coast, a jungle-like spine down its middle and dramatic rockery to the east. But it is, in the grand scheme of Thai islands, deliciously unspoilt. And there are reasons for this.

Firstly, it’s a trek to get here: flight, taxi, car ferries (plural), perhaps a speedboat straight to the sand in high season. So those who do finally end up splashing in the gin-clear, bathwater-warm Andaman Sea have made quite an effort. Secondly, this southern part of Thailand has a culture that develops thoughtfully, methodically. Overt displays of wealth and power are not the done thing in this largely Muslim community. Consequently, it has a mellow, softly tuned vibe. It’s a low-rise, go-slow kind of place, the rustle of the breeze through the rubber-tree plantations interrupted only by a muezzin’s call to prayer.

The Muslim community is joined in this juicy melting pot by a hefty chunk of Thai Chinese (it was a stop-off point on a trading route) and the once nomadic sea gypsies. Everyone might dance to a slightly different beat, but the general rhythm of Lanta is a groovy one. In the 1980s, the first rucksack-carrying travellers trickled over from the mainland, a few beach huts sprang up and a little scene sparked off. What visitors there were (mostly Scandinavians and Germans) cruised around on junkyard mopeds, ate king prawns the size of lobsters at roadside shacks and knocked back not-quite-chilled Singha beer by lantern light. It was a relaxed, unplugged scene (literally—the island was only hooked up to mains electricity in 1996).

Of course, if you want to crash in a basic sandy shack, you still can; check out **Lanta Roundhouse** (www.lantaroundhouse.com; doubles from THB350 or ₹670). But a steady stream of more grown-up →

**IT'S A LOW-RISE, GO-SLOW KIND OF PLACE,
THE RUSTLE OF THE BREEZE THROUGH THE
RUBBER-TREE PLANTATIONS INTERRUPTED ONLY
BY A MUEZZIN'S CALL TO PRAYER**





The pool
at Pimalai

PHOTOGRAPH: MIRIAM BLEEKER



boltholes have emerged on the western coast in the past 10 years. There's **Costa Lanta** (www.costalanta.com; doubles from THB3,600 or ₹6,850), an overgrown garden punctuated with minimalist havens of polished concrete. **Layana** (www.layanaresort.com; doubles from THB7,500 or ₹14,300) is the jazziest place to bed down on this stretch. The adults-only paradise is right on a wide, deserted beach. The sunbeds have buzzers to press for service, and the grey beanbags are great for a mid-afternoon snooze. There's

also a sleek oblong pool that points straight out to sea. No fountains, no fuss, no chlorine. Just salt water that's hydrolysed to the same level as human tears. The rooms have wide beds and sunken baths, and the suites' outdoor showers are an absolute treat. There's a restaurant whipping up the freshest seafood you can think of. And a recent refurbishment means new additions to the already superb spa and a top-notch two-bedroom villa called La Maison.

Beyond these hotel hotspots are beach bars, with driftwood, palm →



fronds and bamboo furniture, dotting the sand. Kantiang Bay has two gems: Same Same But Different and the Why Not bar. There are full-moon parties, half-moon parties, new-moon parties, beginning-of-season parties, end-of-season parties, mid-season parties. But they're all on a small scale, just an excuse to string up the star-shaped paper lanterns and call in a local band that does great renditions of Nirvana and Oasis. The boys behind the bar wear skinny jeans and have shiny black hair down to their elbows, silver rings studded with turquoise, a number of piercings and tattoos. The scene hasn't changed for 15 years—even the music is still the same.

If you aren't too hungover to go in the water the next day, there's fantastic diving here, incredible visibility, underwater pinnacles, coral outcrops and masses of marine life. Koh Haa, an hour and a half out, is a collapsed volcanic island with steep drop-offs to the side and more than a dozen dive sites, caverns and chambers where you'll see turtles, octopuses and barracuda. Dedicated divers won't blanch at the two-hour boat ride to the even more impressive Hin Daeng, the red rock, a coral-rich playground for spotting manta rays and maybe even whale sharks. And you don't have to arrange a dive through your hotel: there are dive shops in almost every village, which tend to be much cheaper and just as good. If scuba isn't your thing, there's brilliant fishing, snorkelling, sea kayaking to the limestone caves at Koh Talabeng, and longtail boat trips to the gnarled mangroves around Koh Klang and Koh Lanta Noi.

But to really understand the island, you need to forget the obvious attractions and explore a bit. Hire a moped and head away from the west coast, away from the beaches, through the tangled green interior and out east. Buzz past houses with wrought-iron birdcages over the hump of the island and down the other side. From the top, there are Jurassic Park-like views, out across the water to Lanta's many uninhabited islets.

And at the bottom of the hill is the Old Town, a time warp of a place, a film set of shuttered old teak houses on stilts. There are a few lovely bars and restaurants, like Apsara and Caoutchouc, a shop that just sells hammocks (it's called Hammock House, you can't miss it), a mynah at the Fresh Restaurant that squawks 'hello' and 'good morning', whatever the time of day, and some kooky dwellings to stay in. There are two overwater rooms at **Lanta Pole Houses** (www.lantapolehouses.com; doubles from THB1,500 or ₹2,850) and four at **Mango House** (www.mangohouses.com; doubles from THB1,500 or ₹2,850). And there's none of that Piña Colada dime-a-dozen sunset feel. Here, facing east, it's strong coffee and a blast of pink dawn with the high tide lapping beneath your floorboards.

For something more unabashedly luxe, there's no beating **Pimalai** (www.pimalai.com; doubles from THB6,600 or ₹12,700). It's big, with more than 100 rooms, but so artfully designed that it doesn't feel it. Gorgeous pool villas are tucked between trees on the hilltop; regular suites trickle towards a powdery swathe of beach. To the left and behind, rugged monkey-filled →



A hut on Koh Lanta beach. Above: customers at the Why Not bar. Opposite page, clockwise from top left: moped fuel; a bungalow at Lanta Roundhouse; a bowl of flavourful Thai basil; a pool villa at Pimalai





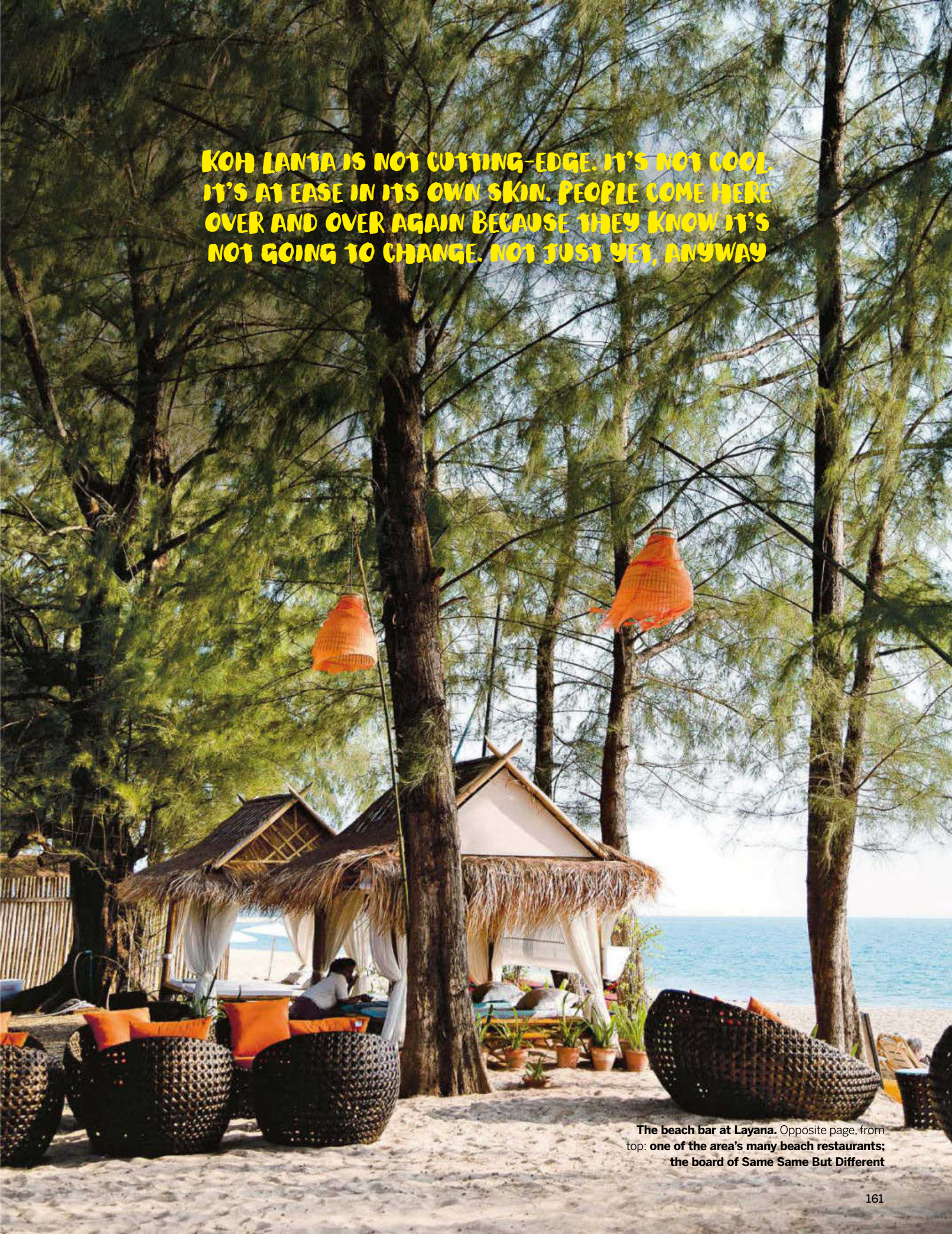
forest hugs the curve of the bay. On the water, there are no jet-skis, no speedboats, just the swoosh of the waves along the half-mile stretch of shore. You might see elephants wander down with their mahouts for a bath. The spa is superb, tumbling down the hill, with rushing water, pools of koi carp, thatched salas and tiny Thai therapists who are thrillingly mean, crunching and kneading with no mercy. No promises of a life-changing, time-altering treatment, just serious therapies to make you feel better. At night, the hotel is lantern-lit. Cicadas roar. Frogs croak by the pools. Inside the rooms, the look is low-key, with dark wood, floor-to-ceiling windows and curtains made from slices of bamboo. It's chic, but not groundbreaking. But you aren't here for that, anyway. If you wanted a blast, a buzz, you'd be on Phuket, or Samui. Pimalai, much like Koh Lanta itself, is in a different zone. It's not cutting-edge. It's not cool. It's at ease in its own skin. People come here over and over again because they know it's not going to change. Not just yet, anyway. 📍

GETTING THERE

Fly to Krabi with Thai Airways (www.thaiairways.com. Stopover in Bangkok) from major Indian cities. Take a taxi about 70km south, followed by two car ferries, to reach Koh Lanta. Indian passport-holders get visas on arrival in Thailand, for up to 15 days (www.thaiemb.org.in). Applications can also be submitted through VFS (www.vfs-thailand.co.in); these take up to five working days to process. Visas cost THB1,000 (₹2,000).



KOH LANTIA IS NOT CUTTING-EDGE. IT'S NOT COOL. IT'S AT EASE IN ITS OWN SKIN. PEOPLE COME HERE OVER AND OVER AGAIN BECAUSE THEY KNOW IT'S NOT GOING TO CHANGE. NOT JUST YET, ANYWAY



The beach bar at Layana. Opposite page, from top: one of the area's many beach restaurants; the board of Same Same But Different

TRIP

Nothing is as it seems in the uplands of Argentina—a wondrously eerie place for an



OUT

off-road adventure, says **Jonathan Bastable**. Photographs by **Alistair Taylor-Young**





Near the eerie pumice stone field that looks like the ruins of Sodom

A perfect cone, a mini-Fuji that stands alone on a salt flat as straight and level as a becalmed sea, Cono de Arita is the most mesmerising volcano you are ever likely to set eyes on. At first sight its shape appears petite—you'd think it was the smallest volcano in the world. But this is a trick of perspective, an illusion created by the tall mountains behind it. And there's another strange effect: at ground level, the Arita cone appears to be the same muddy colour as the dry plain, but if you climb the gravel dune to the west of it, everything changes. The brown ground looks ice-white from this height and angle because the sun's rays are reflected by the salty crystals in the earth, and the volcano turns onyx-black. In the midday light, all I could see was its geometric shape, seemingly detached from the earth, floating like a silent spacecraft above the desert.

The volcano stands in the middle of the Argentinian part of the Puna (the name for the vast, high-altitude Andean desert plateau). Mountainous ridges divide this flatland into a series of startlingly different environments. So to cross the Puna in a four-wheel-drive is to climb and fall, climb and fall, and to be constantly surprised by a landscape that changes before your eyes. Each new valley constitutes a new world: visually, botanically, zoologically, geologically, even texturally. One afternoon, I strolled across the hard surface of a salt lake, the sodium under my boots crunching just like snow that had frozen overnight. An hour later, I was in a wilderness of clay where the red-brown earth was cracked and spongy underfoot: to explore it was like walking across the surface of a slightly over-baked chocolate muffin. And the mountains, of which there are many, all seemed to belong to different orogenic pedigrees. I saw the dizzying peaks—Llullaillaco, Socompa, Aracar, Incahuasi—that form the border with Chile. Elsewhere, I passed small ashen tors



is a magical, restless dune of white sand, like a mountain suddenly come alive

(volcanettes, you might call them) arranged in a perfectly straight row, like black pawns on a chessboard. Within the Puna, there were piebald cliff-faces the colours of ice cream in an Italian gelateria: green, pink, yellow. Occasionally, there were mountains that appeared somehow to have ended up in the wrong company: a brick-red massif conspicuously out of place in a grey-headed chain; a purple pike amid a custard-coloured col. My favourite mountains were a nameless range in a stretch called Salar de Antofalla. The slopes were grey and rounded, and it seemed that if I could just reach up and touch them, they would be slightly furry, like the flank of a seal pup.

There's no discernible road across the Puna; the route consists of dirt tracks, so you need a guide who is well acquainted with the country. Mine was Fabrizio Ghilardi, an Italian mountaineer who fell in love with this far-flung corner of Argentina 11 years ago, and came to live here with his wife, Valentina. She is an architect and built them a stylish, rustic house just outside Salta, a city that sits in the

Lerma Valley. Opened in 2008 as Finca Valentina, this is also a boutique hotel—a wonderful place to spend a night or two at the start or end of an expedition. Ghilardi set up a tour company that he named Socompa, after the Andean peak that summoned him here. His aim—to open up the Puna to visitors—seemed far-fetched at the time. “People told me I was crazy,” he says. “They said, ‘Why would anyone go up there? It is nothing but empty desert.’”

But with every year that passes, this spectacularly empty desert is drawing more visitors (usually once they have been to Buenos Aires and Patagonia). And Salta, gateway to the plateau, is an attraction in its own right. It has some well-preserved colonial Spanish buildings. The whitewashed town hall on the main square, with its two-storey colonnade, was →

Above: The mountains along the road between Cono de Arita and Salar de Antofalla. **Opposite page:** The pumice stone field outside El Peñón. **Previous pages:** Cono de Arita



The desert outside
the village of Tolar
Grande in Salta

built by the conquistadores. The church on the opposite side of Plaza 9 de Julio—a profusion of lilac and cream—has an overblown faux-Rococo rocketship of an altar.

A block away is the more austere and attractive Church of San Francisco. Inside, a visibly pregnant Virgin Mary is draped with offerings of knitted booties and surrounded with snapshots of babies—all ostensibly conceived as a result of prayers offered to the expectant mother of God.

The unborn Jesus in the basilica is not Salta's only sacred child. Just a few steps away, the High-Country Archaeological Museum houses the frozen bodies of three Inca children—a teenage girl and a younger girl and boy—who were sacrificed about 500 years ago on the peak of the Llullaillaco volcano. The children would have died of exposure in a single night. But the dry cold that killed them also preserved them, more or less in perpetuity. In 1999, the bodies were excavated and brought to Salta, causing controversy and protest.

I caught sight of the far-off frosted topknot of Llullaillaco, where the sacrificial children were found, at the end of my first day on the Puna. Going the whole way across the

plateau from north to south involves long, bumpy days in the car. It can be tiring, but that is partly because it is constantly exhilarating; there is so much to be amazed by at every turn. Making the crossing this way means that you save some of the outstanding sights until the last day, when you reach El Peñon, just inside the plateau's southern fringe. This village is a short drive from the eerie pumice stone field, which looks like the bitter ruins of Sodom. Nearby, the magical, restless dune of white sand is like a mountain suddenly come alive.

When you are visiting the Puna, you stay at *hosterías municipales*, state-owned guest houses—cheerful and comfortable, unfussy in the nicest possible way. Everyone eats the same meal in the evening: *tallarines* (South American noodles) with a slice of beef, or barbecued goat with Russian salad. The electricity goes off during the hours of darkness, but you won't notice because you will be deadbeat and blissfully asleep. The *hostería* at El Peñon is better than most, because it is managed by the Ghilardis. The décor has a touch of Finca Valentina about it, or rather of Valentina's finely tuned design sense. I was told that when →







**Cacti are typical
of the region.**
Opposite page: **the
craggy, rocky gorge of
Quebrada del Toro**



To cross the Puna is to be constantly surprised. Each new valley constitutes a



new world: visually, botanically, zoologically, geologically, even texturally

**Ojos del Mar, one of
the Puna's salt flats**



Miuccia Prada passed this way in the spring of 2013, she found it charming and bought some of the colourful local textiles at the village shop in nearby Antofagasta. Ms Prada missed out on the wonderful Grace Cafayate, because the hotel opened at the end of 2013. A five-hour drive from the edge of the Puna, it makes for an extremely pleasurable homecoming when you arrive, dusty and road-weary, after three days in the parched highlands. This is wine country, and the ranch-like main building is set in the middle of a seemingly infinite acreage of new vines, all of them laden with Malbec and Torrontés, those emblematic Argentinian grapes. The Grace is an outdoorsy hotel in an outdoorsy country, so you should be inspired to go horse riding in the spectacular Puna uplands. The wildlife up there is almost as diverse as the landscape. I saw Andean foxes, small, slim and lithe as Siamese cats; chinchilla scurrying over rocks like fuzzy geckos; great flocks of barranquero parrots glorying in their blue-green dragonfly plumage. I spotted flamingos half-asleep on a broad lagoon, where they had arranged themselves in long queues as if waiting at the locked doors of some invisible shop. I failed to see any *ocultos*, but I was very aware of these little rat-like creatures because their subterranean tunnels and burrows make the desert tracks

so rough and rutted. “I’d happily kill them all if I could catch them,” Ghilardi told me.

On our last day in the desert, we passed through the Vega Colorada, an incongruous green water-meadow at the lowest point of a desiccated gorge. This oasis was riddled with becks and gullies that ran deep through it, dividing it into a jigsaw of islets. Having spent most of the day trundling along a rocky steppeland devoid of any life at all, we found the verdant expanse, with its wide variety of birds, truly stunning. There were Puna teals, cinnamon-coloured ground tyrants, Andean geese. But the lords of this lush kingdom were the vicuña, nervous, deer-like creatures that grazed in little knots all over the grassland. A few had gathered on the steep slope that formed the vega’s back wall. Standing sideways, clinging to the hillside, they looked like decorations hanging from the branches of a Christmas tree. And oddity upon oddity, the vega ended as suddenly as it started: its far edge was as neat and clean-cut as the verge of an English lawn. I was getting used to the quick costume changes of the landscape by now, but even so, sometimes, there was nothing to do but stop and stare. 🕒

Above: A sand dune near the pumice stone field.

Opposite page: the landscape changing from desert to mountain



NEED TO KNOW: THE PUNA



GETTING THERE

Fly to Buenos Aires with Emirates (www.emirates.com). Stopover in Dubai) from major Indian cities. Transfer to Jorge Newbery Airport and take a two-hour flight to Salta. Indian passport-holders can apply for a visa at the Embassy of Argentina in New Delhi or the Mumbai consulate, depending on place of residence. Tourist visas are free and take five working days to process. Book a five-day Puna tour with Fabrizio Ghilardi's travel company, Socompa (www.socompa.com).

WHERE TO STAY

Finca Valentina

A chic, homey place just outside Salta. (www.finca-valentina.com.ar; doubles from ARS1,400 or ₹10,000)

Kkala A colourful boutique hotel close to the city centre. The two-level suite has a little balcony. (www.hotelkkala.com.ar; doubles from ARS2,300 or ₹16,500)

Grace Cafayate In the wine region of Cafayate, it has a well-stocked bar. The suites and villas are magnificent. (www.gracehotels.com; doubles from

ARS3,000 or ₹21,500)

Hostería El Peñon This eight-room state-owned guest house is run by the Ghilardis of Socompa and Finca Valentina fame. (www.hosteriaelpeñon.com; ARS1,210 or ₹8,600)

Hacienda de Molinos Formerly the mansion of the governor of Salta, it has a pretty courtyard with a huge pepper tree. (www.haciendademolinos.com.ar; doubles from ARS970 or ₹7,000) **GOOD VALUE**

WHERE TO EAT

Raul's Asado In Santa María, just south of

Cafayate, it serves wonderful steak. (Book through Socompa; +54 387 431 5974)

Muse by Jonathan Cartwright Helmed by the renowned chef, the eponymous restaurant offers great Argentinian and modern European fare, such as llama carpaccio. (www.gracehotels.com)

Terruño In Cafayate's main square, this is great for wine and crepes. (+54 386 842 2460)

Heladería Miranda

The wine-flavoured ice creams hit the sweet

spot. (Av General Güemes)

WHAT TO DO

James Turrell

Museum Browse some truly mind-bending art at this gallery in Salta's Colomé Winery and Estate. Turrell's work explores light and space and each room has a piece of luminous trickery. (www.bodegacolome.com)

Piattelli Vineyards Learn how to make empanadas and more at a cookery course in Cafayate. (www.piattellivineyards.com)

내동골



투명한 그늘아래 여름에서 달까지 연으로 취합니다	대 합 탕	산 낙 지	오 삼 불 고기	가 리 비	동 집	알 탕	해 물 떡 볶 이	해 물 떡 배 기	제 란 말 이	두 부 김 치	참 소 라	키 조 개 구 이	삼 치 구 이	게 불	배 달 이 소 라
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THE HEART OF OLD SEOUL

THE KOREAN CAPITAL MAY BE FORWARD-LOOKING AND MICROCHIP-FAST, BUT, AS **MANNY HOWARD** FINDS, THE TRADITIONS OF YESTERYEAR MELD WITH MODERN LIFE IN SURPRISINGLY GRACEFUL WAYS



PHOTOGRAPHS BY **MARCUS NILSSON**

Charlie Cho and I were standing on the kerb outside three identical restaurants that specialise in pig's feet. Tall and athletic, Charlie has platinum-frosted hair, and works as a creative director at a media company. Before coming to Seoul, I'd asked New York chef Hooni Kim, who's earned a following for his Korean tapas at Danji, for contacts in the city, which led me to Charlie, who insisted on taking me to dinner. Now all we had to do was pick the right place for pig's feet.

Charlie made for the middle one and laughed when I asked him why. Because that place was the first to open its doors, he said, and only after it had gained a citywide reputation for excellence did the other two set up shop. That was 20 years ago, he added,

noting that such flattery happens all the time in Seoul, with whole streets, even neighbourhoods, known for a single dish.

"There's a real tension between fad-driven instincts and traditional food ways," he explained over a pile of thinly sliced pig's feet. "Korean people happily embrace anything, whatever it is, that comes off the plane at Incheon Airport, but we won't eat at a pig's feet restaurant unless it's three generations old and is dedicated to that one thing."

Intercepting my effort to pour my own beer, and using both hands as tradition dictates, Charlie filled my glass. "We are very concerned with keeping up with the Joneses," he said, "but respect for our elders and established ways is in our DNA."

It was exactly the established way of doing and eating things that photographer Marcus





KOREANS EMBRACE ANYTHING THAT COMES OFF THE PLANE AT INCHEON AIRPORT, BUT WE WON'T EAT AT A PIG'S FEET RESTAURANT UNLESS IT'S THREE GENERATIONS OLD

Nilsson and I came to Seoul to explore: the hot pot restaurants, the barbecue joints, the point-and-cook fish markets. The capital city of the fourth-largest economy in Asia, Seoul is a pulsing, twinkling metropolis of the future, a global powerhouse of 10 million boiling away on the banks of the Han River. It is by turns elegant and gritty, giddy and bone-deep conservative.

The divide created by the Han is more than simply geographical. The pig's feet restaurants are on the north side of the river, in what has come to be known as the old town: the south bank is home to Gangnam and all that it represents. The chatter in the south now is of the potential of Bitcoin, the next episode of *Survival Audition K-Pop Star*, and the future of the lending economy. In the north, the conversation is about the health benefits of fermentation, the proper use of a white lotus blossom and the rhythms of the lunar

Above, clockwise from left: A vendor at Gwangjang Market; a tofu restaurant in Insa-dong; fried zucchini at Dadam; Jung Jae-deok, the chef at Dadam; bean paste at Seoil farm. Opposite page: the city sprawls on both sides of the Han River. Previous pages, from left: Itaewon, a neighbourhood in the old town; a beer-maker at Jangja's Butterfly Brewery

calendar. In these northern districts—especially Seodaemun, Jongno, Mapo, and Yongsan—the markets still form the backbone of the country's folk traditions. There, among the stalls selling worn-looking laptops and golf irons, the brutalist culinary legacy of Seoul's street food lives on—in pig parts and critter innards—deep-fried, charred or scalded. It is also north of the Han that artisanal food and time-honoured handicrafts are flourishing.

Bukchon Hanok Village, north of the river, is Seoul's mecca of tradition. It's one of the few areas where most of the old housing stock has been protected, much of it now converted into restaurants and galleries. And it was there that I met Kim Taek-sang, master distiller at Bukchon Heritage Studio. "In the zodiac, each day has an animal assigned to it," he told me as his slender fingers flickered over a plastic laundry tub full of rice and yeast. "Our ancestors used to make soy sauce on the Day of the Horse because →

horses have the darkest blood. Soju is made on the Day of the Pig because pig's blood is the lightest and the liquor will be clearest."

Origin stories say the pig was the last animal to arrive at a gathering called by the Jade Emperor. A modern retelling of the fable would probably have the pig carousing with his boss the night before, passing out on a bench and missing the emperor's wake-up call. (And having his image posted on blackoutkorea.com, the site where citizens upload pictures of people who've passed out in public due to excessive drinking.) Which is to say that drinking is serious business in South Korea. Soju, in fact, is the world's best-selling distilled spirit—the top two brands alone move upwards of 80 million cases a year. (The top two brands of vodka don't sell half that much.)

None of this registered with Kim, who's spent 30 years perfecting the craft he inherited from his mother. Kim's soju, Samhaeju, is distinct, and has earned the official designation of Seoul Intangible Cultural Asset No. 8, from the government. Even thrown back as a shot, it is momentarily sweet, then arid, whereas the industrial stuff is consistently sterile. Kim

Below: the old neighbourhood of Samcheong-dong in the old town. Opposite page: Gu jeol pan, a traditional nine-part dish, at Dadam



was eager to explain why. His mash is made of nuruk, a kind of yeast, and two varieties of rice, as it has been since the Goryeo dynasty (AD 918—1392). Before distillation, each six-and-a-half gallon batch requires a three-stage, 120-day process, including cold fermentation in a clay pot.

"But by far the most important ingredients are my hands," said Kim, interrupting his task of pebbling rice and yeast together to present the impossibly smooth skin of his pink palms and feminine fingers for inspection. "People ask, 'Why the extra step? Why mix by hand?'" he said, growing animated as he explained his belief that he is host to a unique lactobacillus central to the character of Samhaeju. This is not true of just soju, Kim expounded. Artisanal kimchi-makers who work with their bare hands create better kimchi for the same reason. "No matter how many times they wash their hands, there's always residue," he said, citing a scientific study, the specifics of which, alas, fell in the gap between two languages. "Hand flavour!" he pronounced at last, then returned to picking at the contents of the basin on the table.

Another interesting person in the city is Lee Jong-gu, who lived and worked in Milan as a photographer for advertising firms for nearly two decades before finding his calling as the self-appointed guardian of the soban, one of the most neglected traditions in South Korea. A hand-hewn tray table of achingly intricate design, and with cultural significance rooted in Confucianism, the soban was the surface on which Korean life was lived—used at births, weddings, birthdays, funerals, and every meal in between. By the end of the 1800s, individual dining, along with traditional "floor living," was replaced by foreign ways. But Koreans never let go completely. "Even if we have our giant TVs and sofas, everybody sinks to the floor and leans against the furniture," Lee told me. "There's something about us that needs to be close to the floor."

This attachment to tradition is something Lee Jae Ho echoes. He had a 15-year career as a financial analyst before he started opening restaurants, first a few KFC knockoffs that failed and then, three years ago, Doo-Boo-Ma-Eol. Tucked into one of the many capillary-like alleys off a main street in Insa-dong—an area once crowded with stores for GIs that is now awash with upscale boutiques, cafés, and restaurants—it's one of the few places in Seoul that makes its own tofu on-site. That's no small claim in a town where it's a challenge to find a place without bean curd on the menu. "Big companies produce tofu, but almost no restaurants make the premium stuff in-house," Lee told me over the din of a custom, stainless steel tofu →







TEMPLE CUISINE'S AUSTERE CHARMS—NO FIRE, SALT, GARLIC OR MEAT—COUNTER THE DENSE, COMPLICATED FLAVOURS AND MEAT-CENTRED DISHES OF MAINSTREAM FARE

machine in a narrow room wedged behind the hostess stand. “Twenty years ago every household made their own, but it’s too difficult to do today. Everybody’s too busy.”

As Marcus and I settled into the wood-panelled dining room, the clatter of production was replaced by the rumble of conversation. An elderly couple nodded a greeting and then, when our meal arrived, nodded again with enthusiastic encouragement. One of the most delightful qualities of the bright red gravy common to so many Korean dishes is the combination of its earthy we-cook-it-all-day flavour and a bright, bottle-rocket fieriness. Add that to the silk pajamas of homemade soft tofu, put it in a piping-hot stone bowl, and that is the soondubu jjigae (soft tofu stew) here at Doo-Boo-Ma-Eol. The fire went from crackling to infernal when the kkotgae tang (blue crab stew) was served, but the heat managed, somewhat miraculously, to part long enough for

Above, clockwise from top left: Jogyesa temple, the centre of Zen Buddhism in South Korea; Kim Bong-chan, the owner of Hangaram, and his rice supplier, Jang Mi-ran; temple cuisine ingredients at Hangaram; the Mapo district; Lee Jong-gu making a soban. Opposite page: Dadam is known for its elegantly presented dishes

the crabs and shrimp to deliver a burst of sweet and briny glee.

We continued our eating tour with what’s known as temple cuisine, first at Hangaram, which offers dishes like stuffed lotus flower leaves and fermented skate wings, and then at Dadam, where the young chef Jung Jae-deok explained the cuisine’s attraction. “I thought it was boring—too simple to be great,” he said. “I was wrong. When you’re cooking, you have to think about where the food comes from, whom it’s going to, where it’s going. When you’re eating you have to think about the bite in your mouth, not the one on the plate. That sharpens your focus.” Indeed, the austere charms of this kind of cooking—no fire, no salt, no garlic, no meat—offer a counterpoint to the dense, complicated flavours and meat-centred dishes of mainstream fare. The dishes we ordered at Dadam had evocative names like “Mountain Wrap with Baked Yam” and “Rules, Mercy, →





At Noryangjin fish market, visitors can buy seafood and have it sliced into sashimi at a market restaurant

and Wisdom” and they came so elegantly presented that I couldn’t help but think of a neighbouring cuisine. “Just like Japanese,” I blurted. Marcus took the camera from his face, revealing a pained grimace, as our interpreter, frowning, declined to translate my blunder for Chef Jung. You get that reaction a lot in Seoul because of the decades that Korea was under strict Japanese control. Conversations have a way of warping toward the relative inadequacy of the Japanese method for everything from cooking to construction.

Marcus and I had heard of a handmade soy sauce operation called Seoil Farm an hour out of town, so we lit out to visit its owner, Shu Boon-rye. Shu, who used to be a travel agent, started making soy sauce 30 years ago, to give as gifts, prompted by the curative effect of her mother’s recipe. Using water from a protected section of the Han, salt from the Yellow Sea, and her own soy beans, she produces some of the most coveted soy sauce in the country.

The main dining room of Seoil Farm looks out on a garden, with clay pots lined up just beyond a tidy hedgerow. But it’s the banquet, anchored by ganjang-gejang, or raw crab in soy sauce, that this place is fabled for. It’s a deceptively simple meal: horse crabs are left to marinate, chilled, in a bowl of Shu’s three-year-old soy sauce that has been mixed with house-made fruit vinegar, sugar, ginger, garlic, onion, liquorice, bay leaf, black pepper, red chillies, dashima kelp and fish sauce. After three or four days, the crabs emerge a fragrant, tender pulp known as “Rice Thief,” for the numerous servings of rice consumed while soaking up the broth.

We had no intention of chronicling the meal, but after one greedy mouthful, Marcus looked up from his plate with a tentative expression: do we dare? Baleful but resigned, I nodded my agreement, and—to the shock of our hosts—we dragged the entire meal across the dining room toward the better light of the window. Marcus worked fast, and when we reconvened at our table, the meal was raucous and hands-on, complete with appreciative groaning when our bowls were refilled.

As we sped back into the city at dusk, I pondered how in such a futuristic place, South Koreans seem to have collectively stopped and taken a deep breath. I had seen the effects in nearly every meal I’d had. It reminded me of what Charlie had told me over pig’s feet and beer. “We’ve had wave after wave of building recently, the razing of whole blocks—neighbourhoods nearly—to make way for the next shiny tower,” he said. “It’s got us thinking, wondering about what we’ve left behind.”



NEED TO KNOW: SEOUL



GETTING THERE

Fly direct with Air India (www.airindia.com) from New Delhi or fly Korean Air via Bangkok (www.koreanair.com) from Mumbai. Indian passport-holders can apply for a visa with VFS Global (www.vfsglobal.com). Visas cost ₹2,400 and take up to two weeks to process.

WHERE TO STAY

Lotte Hotel Seoul A centrally located 5-star hotel. (www.lottehotel.com; doubles from KRW2,90,000 or ₹16,990)
Park Hyatt Seoul This luxe hotel has great restaurants. (www.seoul.park.hyatt.com; doubles from KRW4,35,500 or ₹25,400)

WHERE TO EAT

Dadam Finely plated local cuisine. (97-1 Cheongdam-dong, Gangnam-gu; +82 2 518 6161)
Doo-Boo-Ma-Eol The place for house-made tofu. (30-12 Insadong-gil, Jongno-gu; +82 2 735 9996)
Hangaram Excellent temple cuisine. (150-gil 4, Nonhyeon-ro, Gangnam-gu; +82 2 547 3330)
Seoil Farm Raw crab in handmade soy sauce is the standout. (389-3 Hwabong-ri, Ijuk-myeon, Anseong-si, Gyeonggi-do 456-913)
WHAT TO DO
Gwangjang Market The traditional market is known for apparel,

especially in silk, and handicrafts. (88 Changgyeonggung-ro, Jongno-gu)

Jangja's Butterfly Brewery Explore the process of brewing beer. (14-gil 43, Insadong-gil, Jongno-gu)

Jogyesa Temple A major centre of Zen Buddhism. (55 Ujeongguk-ro, Jongno-gu)

Noryangjin Fish Market Buy raw seafood and get it sliced at one of the restaurants in the market. (688 Nodeul-ro, Dongjak-gu)

Bukchon Heritage Studio Witness the making of Samhaeju, a special soju, and other cultural experiences. (Bukchon 11-ga-gil 1, Jongno-gu)



Artwork at Jogyesa temple.
Opposite page: the temple
food at Hangaram



PHOTOGRAPHS: RAYMOND PATRICK; MICHAEL TUREK/GALLERY STOCK



BALI *at its* FINEST

Some say that the island is overcooked, a paradise that has lost its way. But really, it has just evolved, transforming from a low-key hippy haven to a soulful big hitter, where you can stay smart, but still find a barefoot vibe. **Luli Orchard** gives you the inside track

Bali has been abuzz for a while. This is where Charlie Chaplin came to party with Noël Coward, after all. But now more so than ever, and in a completely different way. You can see it from one end of the island to the other, though nowhere more so than in **Seminyak**, on the coast to the west of the capital, where the hotel, bar and shopping scene has gone from simmering to stratospheric. Despite the grumbles about over-development, Bali continues to have huge appeal, especially for creative people on a mission to opt out of the rat race. The government is now putting greater emphasis on the environment by implementing building rules, and areas such

as the laid-back town of **Ubud** have proved that sustainability and economic growth can go hand-in-hand. Elsewhere, several big hotel brands have set up spectacular sandcastles. With so much going on, it can get a bit confusing. Here's how not to miss the finest offerings in paradise.

BEST SECRET RETREAT

Puri Ganesha (www.puriganesha.com; doubles from IDR88,84,700 or ₹43,000) is a laid-back hideaway on the northwestern coast. The villas have a rustic charm, while the small spa offers great Balinese massages. Owner Diana von Cranach creates food using local ingredients, enhanced with her own expertise in raw food. The menu changes every day, but one of the signature dishes is tempeh (a soy product) marinated in coriander seed,

Clockwise from right: stir-fried seafood at the COMO Shambhala Estate; the infinity pool at Alila in Uluwatu; Waroeng Tugu; the W Retreat & Spa Bali. Previous pages, from left: a fisherman at sea; tropical plant leaves



garlic, onion, turmeric and Javanese mountain honey, topped with prawns and ginger flower, tomato, shallots and lemon basil. Diana also arranges activities through her tour company, **Well-KeptSecrets** (www.well-keptsecrets.info)—visits to hidden beaches and restaurants, private picnics, whatever you might fancy.

BEST CHAIN HOTELS

There's the **Fairmont** (www.fairmont.com; doubles from IDR46,80,270 or ₹22,450) in Sanur. **Alila** has a property in Uluwatu (www.alilahotels.com; doubles from IDR11,767,845 or ₹56,580) and will open in Seminyak soon. There's a **Ritz-Carlton** in Nusa Dua, with a Reserve property in Ubud coming up (www.ritzcarlton.com; doubles from IDR50,67,490 or ₹24,370). The **Four Seasons Resort Bali at Sayan** (www.fourseasons.com; doubles from IDR68,22,900 or ₹32,790) has been given an eco-sensitive makeover; the various **Amans** (www.amanresorts.com; doubles from IDR10,630,000 or ₹51,170) remain standard-bearers. The **COMO Shambhala Estate** (www.comohotels.com; doubles from





IDR1,19,58,300 or ₹57,500) sits pretty, high above the Ayung Gorge, as does the clifftop **Bulgari** (www.bulgarihotels.com; doubles from IDR1,59,50,400 or ₹76,700), which looms above the Indian Ocean.

BEST FINGER FOOD

There's no need for cutlery at **Waroeng Tugu**, a stylishly rustic private kitchen in Hotel Tugu Bali, that serves up dishes like chicken marinated in coconut milk, steamed fish in banana leaves or stewed bamboo shoots and tofu. You can even learn how to cook Javanese and Balinese cuisine based on the chef's grandmother's recipes. (www.tuguhotels.com)

BEST POLE DANCING

Luna2 studiotel, a hotel-studio hybrid in Seminyak, has a groovy

bar called Pop, featuring a pole for dancing and a peephole window looking onto the pool. There's an underground cinema where a waitress dressed like a flight attendant will serve you a Smoked Negroni, stirred and smoked in oak and orange peel. Try the tournedos Rossini with wagyu beef, foie gras, black truffle and Madeira jus at the restaurant, Orbit. The hotel exceeds all expectations—not even the Aman hotels unpack your suitcases for you. (www.luna2.com; doubles from IDR66,93,500 or ₹32,000)

BEST FUSION

Mama San (www.mamasanbali.com) is the little sister of the better-known **Sarong** (www.sarongbali.com). Top-notch pan-Asian cuisine (think red curry of duck with lychees; →



A deck at the COMO Shambhala Estate.
Opposite page, clockwise from top: **a room**
at Sandat Glamping Tents; the interior
of Mama San; the main bar at KU DE TA

twice-cooked pork ribs with black beans, ginger and soy) is served in a retro warehouse with a 1920s Shanghai theme. It's spread out over two floors and has air-conditioning—still a novelty in this part of the world.

BEST GLAMPING

The owners of **Sandat Glamping Tents**, Bali's first foray into glamping territory, are Italian: she's a lawyer, he's a tattoo artist. As if from nowhere and out of nothing, they've created an impressive set-up north of Ubud, in a picture-perfect valley of rice fields. Think pools, hand-carved wooden furniture and Balinese art. (www.glampingsandat.com; from IDR29,44,600 or ₹14,000)

BEST HUNTER-GATHERER EXPERIENCE

Stroll through the morning markets with **Bumbu Bali Cooking School** and pick up armloads of fish, vegetables and spices. Go back to a traditional kitchen and spend the afternoon slicing, dicing and simmering. Then devour the delicious results. Do note that the classes are exceedingly popular, so booking at least two months in advance is recommended. (www.balifoods.com; IDR12,71,300 or ₹6,000 per person with market visit; only 14 participants per class)

BEST BEATS-PLUS-EATS

The introduction of a dress code has done nothing to cramp anyone's style at the Seminyak institution, **KU DE TA**. The August parties are the stuff of legend: there's something on every night,



with highlights including the Underwater Wonderland Bikini Party and White Party. The Indonesian fare at **Mejekawi**, the restaurant upstairs, is heaven. It has five- and 12-course tasting menus, which change every few months. (www.kudeta.net)

BEST DIVING

If you want to get deep under water, head to **OK Divers**, in Padangbai. Apart from multiple dive sites, you can swim with sharks, turtles and plenty of manta rays. (www.okdiversbali.com)

BEST CREATIVE ZONE

Ubud is the art capital of Bali, and down many of its flower-strewn streets, the

banana-pancake cafés give way to small temples and traditional and contemporary galleries. If you're looking to buy, try modern galleries such as **Sika** (www.sikagallery.info) and **Komaneka** (www.gallery.komaneka.com). **Nusantara** (+62 361 971 798) has Indonesian tribal art, and →





The rice terraces of
Tegalalang, north of Ubud

PHOTOGRAPH: RAYMOND PATRICK





BEST DESIGNER WEAR

French fashion designer **Magali Pascal** (www.magalipascal.com) waves her magic wand of effortless style over everything she creates. You'll find chic dresses, tops, pantsuits and more, all in softly feminine fabrics like silk and lace. On the other hand, **BIASA** (www.biasabali.com) is an old Seminyak favourite that makes resort clothing for men and women. There's a range of dresses, pants and shorts, but the real stars are the fun, creatively cut kaftans in circular shapes.

BEST VILLAS

In Bali, villas make total sense: for the staff, the privacy, the value for money. **Elite Havens** (www.elitehavens.com; doubles from IDR30,78,300 or ₹15,000) offers gorgeous villas, with bedrooms ranging from one to nine. **Maisonbulle** (www.maisonbullehomes.com; from IDR1,99,710,000 or ₹9,60,450 per week) offers properties with bags of character and style. And in lush grounds a 45-minute drive from Seminyak, **Uma Wana Prasta** (www.luxurybaliestate.com; from IDR24,000,000 or ₹1,15,000 for the entire villa; minimum seven-night stay) is perfect for parties: it has enough space to host a bash for 200 in a tropical garden and sleeps 14.



down the road, the eponymous gallery of the late **Jean-François Fichot** (www.jf-f.com) is great for eclectic jewellery and home décor. If you're just looking, be sure to visit the **Neka Art Museum** (www.museumneka.com) and the **Puri Lukisan** (www.museumpurilukisan.com). **ARMA** (www.armabali.com) has an impressive collection of works by Indonesian and foreign artists. It is also home to a cultural centre, that offers classes in the crafts of batik and woodcarving, as well as traditional dance. Conveniently, it also has a hotel (doubles from IDR20,08,000 or ₹9,600).

BEST SUPER-HEALTHY CAFÉS

For everything healthy and wholesome, it's got to be the green smoothies at **Betelnut Café** in Batu Bolong (+62 821 4 6807 233). Or then, head across to Batu Belig, where **Watercress Café** (www.watercressbali.com), known for its salads, roasted vegetables and quiches, now does dinner as well. The house salad (sunflower, pumpkin and sesame seeds toasted with soy sauce, crispy tempeh, sweet corn and leafy greens) is so good for you, you'll feel the need to achieve balance by washing it down with a Lemongrass Tart cocktail—a

refreshing concoction of gin, lemongrass, lime, marmalade and pomelo.

BEST FOR FAMILY FUN

The **Bali Equestrian Centre** is a wonderful place for horseback adventures. Apart from ponies for kids and horses for adults, there are day camps, village tours for the entire family, even a Sunday brunch. There's a pool and play area where parents can keep an eye on their kids while enjoying a meal at the restaurant. All with lovely views of lush rice fields. (www.baliequestriancentre.com)

BEST YACHTS

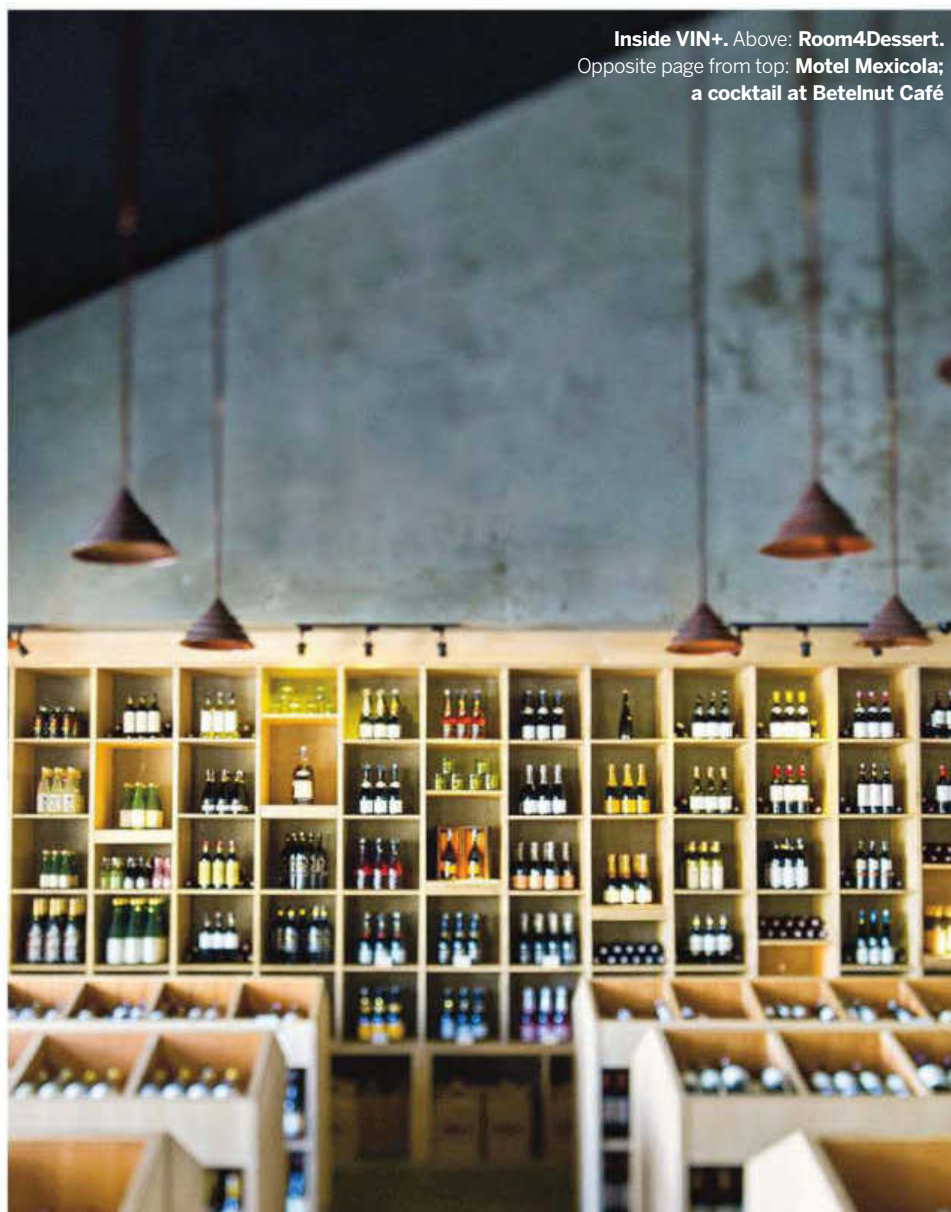
Indonesia has more than 17,000 islands, so exploring them on a boat makes sense. Certain hotel groups have their own tours, such as the *Alila Purnama* by **Alila** (www.alilahotels.com; doubles from IDR1,70,000,000 or ₹8,15,000) and the *Amanikan* by **Aman**; do the seven-night tour, through the Nusa Tenggara island chain (www.amanresorts.com; doubles from IDR4,16,000,000 or ₹20,00,000). Or charter the *Alexa* by **TALIKA OAZIA Private Cruises**, owned by designer Veronika Blomgren (www.alexaprivatecruises.com; from IDR40,000,000 or ₹1,90,000 per night; minimum booking of three nights).

BEST FOR A SWEET TOOTH

For the most delicious croissants this side of the Rive Gauche, head down side roads in Canggu and Umalas to **Monsieur Spoon** (www.monsieurspoon.com). In Ubud, Will Goldfarb, who launched the restaurant at KU DE TA, has opened **Room4Dessert** (www.room4dessert.asia). Order the Loneliness redux, a confection made of feather-light cashew sponge, soy-milk and cacao.

BEST CUSTOM RIDES

Whether you're looking for a customised motorbike, a →



Inside VIN+. Above: **Room4Dessert**.
Opposite page from top: **Motel Mexicola**;
a cocktail at **Betelnut Café**

surfboard with your own design or just coffee and a bite of spicy Thai chicken, the guys at **Deus Ex Machina**, an amazing space in Canggu, can sort you out. (www.deuscustoms.com)

BEST TEXTILES

Threads of Life is a fair-trade gallery and shop in Ubud that works directly with rural women across Indonesia to make museum-quality textiles and baskets. The idea behind the initiative is to empower the women to create their own financial security while preserving local crafts. (www.threadsoflife.com)

BEST BRUNCH

Potato Head Beach Club (www.ptthead.com) is built like the Colosseum and people party like gladiators to the sounds of FatBoy Slim (the band has even performed here). It's vast but relaxed. And your drink, designed by top mixologist Dré Masso, promises to be excellent. Also, the pan-Asian Sunday brunch at Starfish Bloo at the **W Retreat & Spa Bali** (www.starwoodhotels.com) is pretty great, with a stunning ocean view.

BEST FRENCH FOOD

Sip Wine Bar, a brasserie in Seminyak, was started by the late Christian Vannequé, star restaurateur and sommelier. Sit on a banquette and enjoy unpretentious French food and one of the best wine lists on the island. (www.sip-bali.com)

BEST DINING SPACE

The **Merah Putih** is a high-end Indonesian restaurant with a serious international twist. The cathedral-like building is an inspiration. So is the beef shin 'bak pao'. (www.merahputihbali.com)

BEST MEXICAN FOOD

Motel Mexicola looks like it's been airlifted in from somewhere south of the border, with its zany colour scheme. It's totally bonkers, and a great place to hang with amigos. (www.motelmexicolabali.com)

BEST NEIGHBOURHOOD CHANGER

The **Fairmont Sanur Beach Bali** has given this sleepy corner of the southeastern coast a bit of a wake-up call. The hotel's use of space and the minimal design are spectacular. You'll get a variety of cuisines, from island fare using local ingredients to pan-Asian and, going further, the flavours of Australia and the Pacific. The spa is so good you'll never want to leave—try the Balinese Coffee Polish. (www.fairmont.com; doubles from IDR40,11,600 or ₹19,250)

BEST LADIES' (SURF) SCHOOL


Release your inner Gidget at **Surf Goddess Retreats**. Created more than a decade ago as a way



Above: Veronika Blomgren, owner of the *Alexa*, at her home in Bali. **Opposite page:** the *Alexa*

of getting more women to get comfortable with the traditionally male-dominated sport, it caters to all levels from beginner to advanced, and offers yoga, bicycling and a spa. Just no dudes—really. (www.surfgoddessretreats.com)

BEST WINES

Next door to Motel Mexicola is **VIN+**, a large bamboo structure which houses a bar and a restaurant. There's also a shop that stocks more than 18,000 bottles of fine wine from all over the world, as well as spirits and an especially good selection of sake. (+62 361 473 2377) 

GETTING THERE

Fly Thai Airways (www.thaiairways.com. Stopover in Bangkok) or Jet Airways (www.jetairways.com. Stopover in Singapore) from major Indian cities. Indian passport-holders are issued visas on arrival in Bali. These are valid for 30 days and cost ₹2,200. Passports must be valid for at least six months. Apply online for transit visas to enter Singapore (www.ica.gov.sg), which cost ₹1,400 and take a day or two to process



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TRAVEL TALK

NEW DELHI All work and no play makes for a dull business traveller, so we invited more of the work-hard-play-hard variety to cocktails and dinner at the Hyatt Regency Delhi. The Living Room at The Mansion, an unconventional space of interconnecting rooms that make entertaining more casual and intimate, was the venue for a cool display of Van Heusen's sharp business wardrobe. (Guests also received gift cards and crisp white shirts from the brand.) Meanwhile, bartenders served up innovative cocktails while executive chef Marin Leuthard outdid himself with hors d'oeuvres such as octopus ceviche and carrot soup, and mains including a slow-roasted lamb loin with a dash of coconut curry and a Tunisian vegetable tagine. Travel industry honchos like Suman Billa, Aditya Ghosh and Ratna Chadha mingled with those from the media, such as Ravi Agrawal, Manu Joseph and CNT contributing editor Samanth Subramanian. Talk (when not focused on the delicious lamb) was, unsurprisingly, on summer vacation plans! **T**



CNT's Divia Thani Daswani and Hyatt's executive chef Marin Leuthard

Van Heusen's display



Akshat Kapoor, Simran Bawa and the Hyatt's Arpana Pradhan



Suja and Suman Billa



Anshu Khanna



Justin Rowlett, CNT's Sunaina Talwar Khiani, Shampa Bari and Bee Rowlett



Manu Joseph



Akanksha Redhu, Naina Redhu and Aditya Ghosh



Manavi Ghosh



Rolf and Anupama Blaser



The appetisers and bar



Midhat Hussain with CNT's Aditi Chaudhuri and Ritika Bhatnagar



Emma Vaughn and Ravi Agrawal



CNT's Priya Singh with Megha Kaushik



Samanth Subramanian



Padmaparna Ghosh



Neha and Vivek Ramabhadran



Hyatt's Nilanjana Gupta



The table setting



Hyatt's Aseem Kapoor



Hyatt's Somnath Dey



CNT's April issue was a part of the display



Ratna Chadha



Jiten Thukral and Sumir Tagra



Ozer Guler



Models from Urban Model Management were styled exclusively by Jean Claude Biguine

VOGUE INDIA FASHION FUND

In Association With
fDCI
FASHION DESIGN COUNCIL OF INDIA

Round 1 of the highly anticipated Vogue India Fashion Fund saw a diverse mix of design talent scoured from across the country! The 20 semi-finalists displayed their creations to the judges who imparted precious insights on starting a successful fashion label.



Payal Khandwala with her collection

SUNIL SETHI
President, Fashion Design Council of India on The Fashion Fund and You
“Mentorship is hard to come by. When it comes to a VIFF winner, everyone gives you the time of day.”



The Jean Claude Biguine team at work



Dhruv Kapoor strikes a pose with his models



ALKA NISHAR
Chairperson, AZA Fashions on Retail
“What we see is the originality, the look, the feel and the quality of the product.”



Nimish Shah rolls out his creations

KUNAL DASS *Creative Head of Women's Wear, Van Heusen on Economies of Scale*
“One needs to retain the character of their brand and still make it affordable for the masses.”

Our VIFF jury at the event — Gaurav Gupta, Sunil Sethi, Anaita Shroff Adajania, Suneet Varma, Priya Tanna, Alka Nishar, Kunal Dass, Oona Dhabhar & Pernia Qureshi

OONA DHABHAR
Marketing Director, Condé Nast India on Marketing
“The most critical thing is knowing your consumer—knowing her and knowing what she's looking for.”



THE CONTESTANTS TUNE IN TO THE EXPERTS' ADVICE



Shovit Dasgupta strikes a pose with his models

ANAITA SHROFF
ADAJANIA Fashion Director, Vogue India
on Styling a Collection
"We underestimate the power of good styling... it shouldn't take away from the clothing."



Anavila Misra showcases her collection to the Jury



A new category of accessory designers was added to the Vogue India Fashion Fund 2015

GAURAV GUPTA
Fashion Designer
on Pricing

"It's important not to get puzzled by everything that's happening. Take a break and come up with a strategy and plan."



PRIYA TANNA
Editor, Vogue India
on Brand Ethics
"... Brand ethics is the foundation of everything. It has to be the starting point."



Vogue's Priya Tanna evaluates a designer's collection

Desserts by our venue partner, Palladium Hotel



SUNEET VARMA
Fashion Designer on Knowing Your Customer
"I think discipline to get work done is a huge exercise in learning... everything depends on that discipline."

PERNIA QURESHI
Founder of Pernia's Pop Up Shop on Digital Game
"Every designer should be on an online portal. The reach you have with digital, you can never reach with a physical store."



VAN HEUSEN
POWER DRESSING



Chi Ni at Dusit Devarana New Delhi



CNT's Divia Thani Daswani and Dusit's Birgit Holm

CHIC AT CHI NI

NEW DELHI CNT joined New Delhi's Dusit Devarana at an exclusive preview of the hotel's new restaurant, Chi Ni, which serves contemporary, 'liberated' Chinese cuisine. Brought in by the team behind London's Michelin-starred Kai Mayfair, the menu includes signature dishes such as wasabi prawns, roasted Peking duck and steamed Chilean sea bass. The extensive vegetarian menu also features a variety of soy-based mock meats (including vegetarian goose and fish dishes) in addition to delicious bean curd wraps and cottage cheese. Dusit's Smriti Bhatia was highly involved in the aesthetics, smartly upping the look with bold crockery and accents from Shanghai Tang. All the action takes place under a striking canopy (there are also private dining areas available in the space); the al fresco section promises to be brilliant in autumn. The guests, such as Kai Mayfair regulars Suhel Seth and Tikka Shatruijit Singh, swore the food hit the mark, so Chi Ni is evidently off to a great start. Plus, that name is pure genius.

For reservations, call 011 3015 8686; www.devarana.in



Chef Ban



Shweta Satpathy and Rajiv Luthra



Ankur and Smriti Bhatia



Suhel Seth



Anshika Chaturvedi and Sara Awwad



Jiten Thukral and Sumir Tagra



Gaurav Sinha, Ritu Bararia



Chef Nishant Choubey, Puja Bhasin



Annie Kanwar



Deep Dhillon, Bernard Yoh and Sarina Dhillon



Gautam Kumra, Aradhana and Gokul Mohana



CNT's Sunaina Talwar Khiani



Saif Mahmood



Laurent Guiraud



Rajesh and Neelam Pratap Rudy



Kavita and Raghavendra Rathore
with Simral Lal and Radhika Chopra



Mr Polet and
Radha Bhatia



Ramola Bachchan



Tikka Shatruijit Singh



Raakesh Agarwal



One of the many
appetisers



CNT's Aditi
Chaudhuri



Vikram Oberoi, Sanjay Kapoor
and Shashank Bhagat



The special menu
at the preview



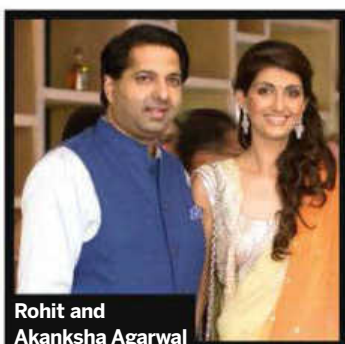
Divya Burman
and Selena Bijli



Ajay Bijli and Amit Burman



His Excellency
Mr Tomasz Lukaszuk,
Ambassador of Poland



Rohit and
Akanksha Agarwal



Rahul and
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Gagan and Rohini Khosla with
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PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL TUREK / GALLERY STOCK

WHERE ARE YOU?

Designed by an award-winning Chinese-born architect, this repository of art contains works from across three continents and 1,400 years. It also houses an upscale restaurant, helmed by a Michelin-starred celebrity chef, that serves contemporary French-Mediterranean cuisine with a local twist. From this place, you get stunning views of the city, which has transformed from a small pearl-fishing village on the coast of the Persian Gulf to the capital of the country it lies in. Where are you?

PRIYANKA AGARWAL

Email your answers to whereareyou@condenast.in and you could win a three-night stay at the Six Senses Zighy Bay in Oman. See overleaf for details—and look out for the answer in our next issue, out in October.



WIN a three-night stay at the Six Senses Zighy Bay in Oman

Set in the Musandam Peninsula, the Six Senses Zighy Bay offers views of mountains on one side and the pretty Zighy Bay beach on the other. All the rooms are beautifully appointed; enjoy your private pool and sand garden in a Pool Villa, and book a treatment at the award-winning Six Senses Spa, such as the royal Moroccan hammam.

The in-house mountaintop fine-dining restaurant, Sense on the Edge, offers five- and seven-course set menus, paired with wines. You could also try an authentic Arabian dining experience at Shua Shack. If you feel like stepping out, the resort provides experiences like a dhow cruise, paragliding and snorkelling, as well as special children's activities,

such as treasure hunts and sand art, at the Chaica's Club.

To win a stay at the Six Senses Zighy Bay, Oman, all you have to do is correctly identify the location of this issue's **Where are you?** competition before **1 September 2015**. The prize includes a three-night stay for two in a Pool Villa, including breakfast. The offer is valid until 7 July 2016 and the dates are subject to availability. The prize is non-transferable and cannot be redeemed for cash. Block-out dates are 17–20 July, 23–28 September, 21 December–9 January, 8–19 February, 23 March–3 April and 5–8 July. For more information, please call +968 2673 5555 or visit www.sixsenses.com. 



WINNER: JUNE-JULY 2015

The winner of the June-July issue's **Where Are You?** competition is **Sonia Dubey**, who correctly identified the above picture as being that of the Niterói Contemporary Art Museum in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She wins a three-night stay for two at Vedic Village Spa Resort, Kolkata.

COMPETITION RULES

1. Entries for *Condé Nast Traveller's* Where Are You? competition can be sent on a postcard, by email or online (all stating the entrant's full name, address and telephone number) and must correctly identify the place described according to the instructions given.
2. Entries by post should be sent to: **Where Are You? competition, Condé Nast Traveller, 3rd Floor, Dubash House, 15 JN Heredia Marg, Ballard Estate, Mumbai 400001.**
3. Email entries should be sent to whereareyou@condenast.in; entries can also be made online at www.entraveller.in.
4. Winners will be judged at the discretion of *Condé Nast Traveller*. The decision of the judges will be final and binding. No correspondence will be entertained. Only one correct answer will be registered per entrant per issue.
5. Each entry must arrive no later than the first day of the second month on that issue's cover. The last day of receiving entries is **1 September 2015**. Winners will be intimated by post or over the telephone wherever possible.
6. The entries must be in English and complete in all respects. Incomplete entries will not be considered for a prize.
7. Condé Nast India Pvt Ltd is not responsible for late, lost or damaged mail or email. Illegible or mechanically-produced entries are not eligible. Entries by text message are not eligible.
8. Prizes will not be transferred or exchanged for cash or any other item. No refunds or credits for changes or cancellations are allowed. All other expenses and costs, which are not specified as being included in the prize, are the sole responsibility of the winner.
9. All prizes must be redeemed prior to the expiry date.

10. Taxes if any on the prize are the sole responsibility of the winner.
11. The Where Are You? competition is open to readers of *Condé Nast Traveller* who are 18 or older on the date of entry and are ordinarily residents of India.
12. Employees of Condé Nast India Pvt Ltd, participating promotional agencies, contributors to *Condé Nast Traveller*, and the families of any of those above are not eligible to contest.
13. All entries to the Where Are You? competition become the sole property of *Condé Nast Traveller* and will neither be acknowledged nor returned.
14. Condé Nast India Pvt Ltd reserves the property of *Condé Nast India Pvt Ltd* and may be used for such purpose and in such media as the company deems fit, without requiring the participant's prior permission.
15. Acceptance of the prize constitutes consent for the use of the winner's name and likeness and those of his/her travelling companion for editorial, advertising and publicity purposes.
16. Condé Nast India Pvt Ltd will not be liable for any loss, damage or expense incurred by a prizewinner or by his/her travelling companion (for example, costs of repatriation) as a consequence of any party participating in providing the prize becoming insolvent or entering into liquidation or bankruptcy.
17. Condé Nast India Pvt Ltd reserves the right to amend any or all of the terms of this contest, or the prizes on offer, at any time without prior notice. All disputes will be subject to the jurisdiction of Mumbai courts only.
18. Contestants, by entering the competition, agree to be bound by the above rules, terms and conditions. Please indicate if you do not want to be added to our mailing list, which is sometimes made available to carefully screened companies.



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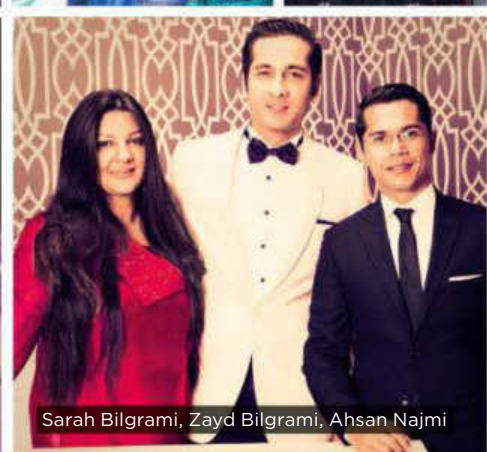


Dikshu Kukreja

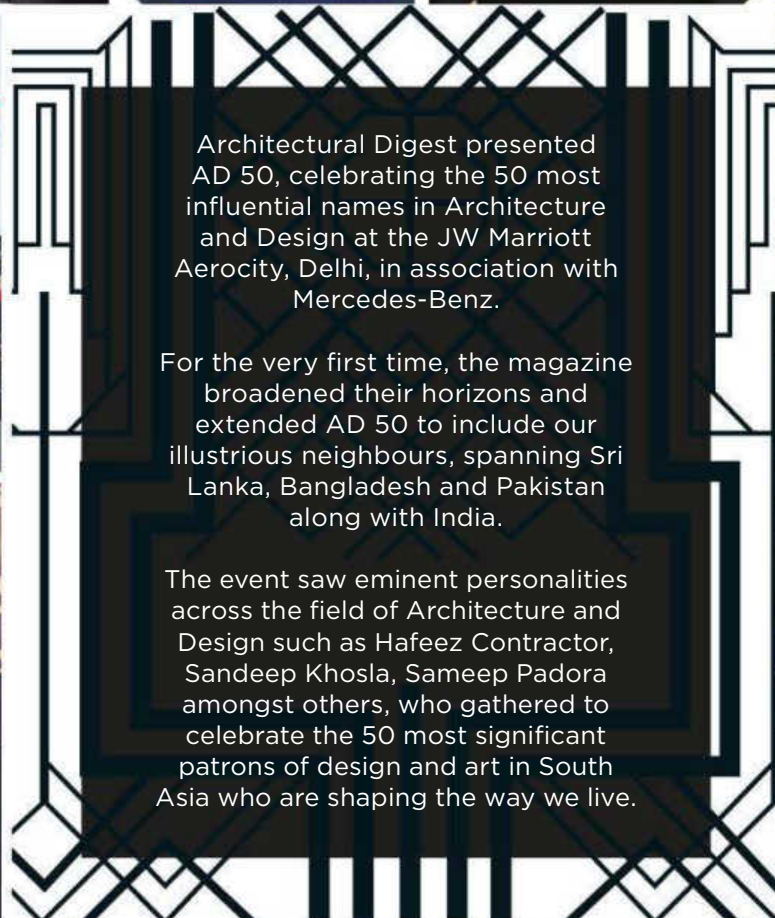


Sheila Sri Prakash

Abha Narain Lambah



Sarah Bilgrami, Zayd Bilgrami, Ahsan Najmi



Sameep Padora



AD's Divya Mishra, Sunil Sethi



Sonal Sancheti



Alex Kuruville, Sonke Hoof



Nuru Karim



Punit Jasuja, Anushka Nadia Menon



Martand Khosla



Vasant and Revathi Kamath



The Mercedes-Benz E-Class Cabriolet



Vaibhav Dimri, Madhav Raman



Divya Jyoti and his wife



Abhimanyu Dalal



Tarun Tahiliani and Manju Sara Rajan



JJ Valaya



Shonan Purie Trehan



Sourabh Gupta



Sarthak Sengupta, Sahil Bagga



Sagar Chordia



Kiran Vaghela



The Asian Paints booth



Siddharth Talwar (seated) and Ankur Choksi (second from right) with the team from AD 50 firm Studio Lotus



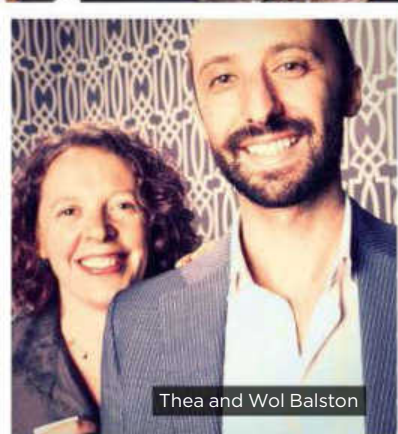
Manit and Sonali Rastogi



Manish and Tanushree Gulati



AD's Sonali Thakur and Ravi Vazirani



Thea and Wol Balston



Phiroza Neterwala and Sunu Aibara



The QUEO set-up



Rooshad Shroff



Tony Joseph

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On the go

Our pick of the most
stylish finds and travel-
related news

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You've probably had your fill of Southeast Asia – so why not venture beyond to one of the most cutting-edge yet traditional countries in the world? Japan has much to offer visitors – from modern metropolises such as Tokyo and Osaka to smaller towns like Kyushu and Hokkaido, you'll find a great mix of the traditional and the contemporary here. One of the most expensive cities in the world, Tokyo's attractions are endless, from the luxury shopping area Ginza and trendy Shibuya to the world's largest fish market, the Tsukiji Fish Market, and mouthwatering sushi and yakitoris. Although you can visit the land of the rising sun all year-round, we'd recommend paying a visit during the utterly gorgeous cherry blossom season that takes places in March.

(www.jnto.org.sg/india/)



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A holiday to the Maldives can be about more than just water sports or lazing on the beach. Now you can also learn the basics of world cuisines at the One&Only Reethi Rah's culinary school. The resort's chefs will teach guests food presentation and cooking skills, for Maldivian, Chinese, Italian, Indian, Arabian, Japanese, Thai and French fare. Participants get a certificate, a recipe card and their very own One&Only Reethi Rah apron and chef's cap. (www.oneandonlyresorts.com)



On
the
go



↑ SIP WINE LIKE A SOMMELIER

Wine enthusiasts can now store their precious bottles in this beauty. Miele's flagship product, the wine unit, is now available in India. The appliance contains the Miele Sommelier Set, where the wine can be stored and easily viewed on five wooden telescopic shelves. Other cool features include the Miele Decanting Rack, the Miele Selector, that displays the bottles by making them appear slightly raised, the Miele Note Board, to write down a wine's origin, grape variety and year, and the Miele Flexi Frame, which provides the perfect storage position for wine bottles. The Miele Glass Holder allows glasses to be cooled to the perfect temperature in a wine-conditioning unit so that sparkling and white wine retain their freshness and temperature.

(www.miele.in)



↑ ANOTHER REASON TO HEAD TO SINGAPORE

If there weren't enough reasons to visit Singapore already, we've added one more. Tourists can now go to two destinations – Faber Peak and Sentosa – on two cable car lines. As you fly above the hill from Faber Peak and cross the harbour on the Mount Faber line, you'll see dolphins below at Resort World Sentosa's Adventure Cove. The new Sentosa line will take you along the numerous attractions that the island has to offer, and you can choose to stop at the Merlion station, Imbiah Lookout station and Siloso Point station.

(www.faberpeaksingapore.com)



↑ When in Amritsar

Planning a visit to the Golden Temple? Take your spiritual experience one step further by booking in to the Hyatt Amritsar. Launched to coincide with this year's International Day of Yoga, complimentary yoga sessions are now offered by the poolside. You can unwind in serenity by the pool each morning. (amritsar.hyathotels.hyatt.com)

↓ THERE IS A RIGHT TIME FOR EVERYTHING

Now is the time to get the new Longines DolceVita watch for the leading lady in your life. Just launched in Chantilly at The Prix de Diane Longines, the premier horse race, this gorgeous steel and diamond piece combines Swiss precision with fine French fashion. Because the woman who has won your heart deserves nothing but the best. (www.longines.com)



⬇ AN ECO-FRIENDLY RETREAT

Nestled amid the verdant hills of Thekkady, Poetree Sarovar Portico is a luxurious 50-room eco resort offering all the modern amenities a guest could need. Built using the latest techniques in sustainable building with a minimalist decor, clean lines and striking angles, this is a luxury cocoon with two restaurants, spa, fitness centre, infinity pool, library, and yoga and telescope deck as well as a banquet hall and boardroom.

(www.poetreeresort.com)



⬆ A SEAMLESS JOURNEY

Travelling through Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport (CSIA)? Make your journey more enjoyable by signing up for the Pranaam GVK Guest Services. Designed to provide guests a seamless and stress-free travel experience, Pranaam has different packages covering a range of services, from assisting business travellers to making young or elderly guests more comfortable. (<http://pranaam.csia.in>)



⌚ Travel In Comfort

We know how tedious it can be to keep shirts perfectly ironed and crisp on a business trip, which is why this is just the solution. Van Heusen's Alpha shirt and Acura shirt are specially designed to keep up with your busy schedule. Tailored for new-age professionals, the Alpha shirts are 100 percent wrinkle-free with a moisture absorption finish. This means quick drying so you don't have to worry about sweat stains and creases. The Acura shirts are made with imported 2 ply cotton Awatti and treated with a drip dry finish, so you don't need to iron them at all. With clean, pucker-free seams, a split yoke and extra durability at the side seams, these shirts mean business.

(vanheusenindia.com)



↑ Adventure travels

Taking an outdoorsy, adventure-filled holiday this season? Then the High Sierra Adventure Travel - series 6 will be your best friend. This three-in-one bag can be used as a backpack, duffel or wheeled upright, and features a beverage pocket, laptop compartments with a cushion, thumb pulls for easy adjustment and a daisy chain for additional attachments. (www.highsierra.in)



↑ A heritage meal

New Delhi, being an ancient city, has a number of areas of historic and cultural interest. And if you'd like to have a meal in a third-generation restaurant serving scrumptious food, you must pay a visit to United Coffee House. With plush, ornate Victorian décor, this seven decades old restaurant serves Continental delicacies. (www.unitedcoffeehouse.com)

↓ Art for the heart

If you're interested in art and are travelling to the capital, make sure to pay a visit to the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art. A philanthropic museum and site for the confluence of modern contemporary art in India, it hosts artists such as SH Raza, Anish Kapoor, Gulam Mohammed Sheikh and V Vishwanadhan. (www.knma.in)



↓ LUXURY FITTINGS

Call it poetry for a bathroom? The Linea basin mixer from Artize is the winner of Germany's iF design award. Its multi-purpose spout pivots to form an arc that controls the temperature of water along the curve and the intelligent design keeps water at the centre of the wash basin, away from the brim. (www.artize.com)



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Room with a view

THAILAND SALA Rattanakosin, Bangkok


Room 307

This is one of seven riverfront rooms at the SALA Rattanakosin, a modernist roost carved out of two 19th-century shop houses and a brick warehouse bang in the middle of sightseeing central. Just out the door in Old Town lies, literally, the august, gilded Reclining Buddha. Behind the white fortress walls of the Grand Palace is the gold-clad Emerald Buddha. Yet the sight to see is the Wat Arun, best viewed at sunset from this very room or, for a change of pace, from the hotel's open-air rooftop bar. Watching it glow intensely across the Chao Phraya, guests are tempted to stay up all night. Its name, after all, means Temple of Dawn, and here in Bangkok, where the sacred has long coexisted with the profane, plenty of revellers are out until the wee hours. But with a setting this spectacular, who could blame you for parking yourself on that day-bed just to enjoy the view?

JOHN OSEID

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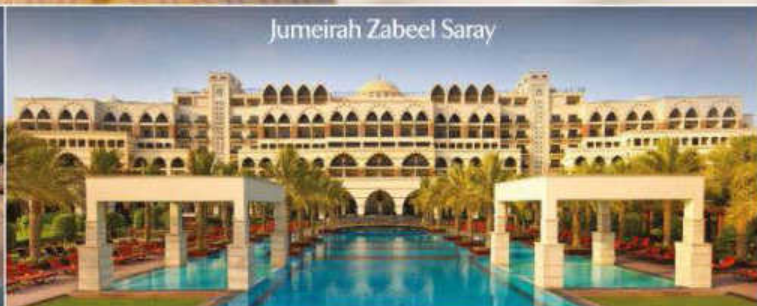
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MY TOP 5 DUBAI FAVOURITES:

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For a taste of local culture: order some mezze (kibbeh, grilled haloumi and fattoush), sip strawberry juice and smoke a grape-mint shisha.

STAY AT AL MAHA

Glamping in the desert is sexier than you imagine.

GO PARTY AT MUSIC HALL

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ZUMA

I know, Zuma is everywhere. And yet, this one does it right. A massive space that still feels intimate and buzzing.

OVERRATED:

The helicopter ride over Dubai.

Why does Dubai always provoke one of two extreme reactions from visitors? They either love it (food, nightlife, shopping, kid-friendly activities) or hate it (it's fake, gaudy, mall-obsessed). Despite the fact that India now sends more tourists to Dubai than any other country in the world (the UK is second), I often find myself having to justify my love for the emirate. I've been a frequent visitor since 2007 and still recall magical evenings from that first trip: parties at far-flung Arabian resorts where Hollywood hotshots mingled with fashionistas from across the Middle East. Everything (and everyone) glittered and shimmered under the glow of the desert sun. (We wore sunglasses with our ballgowns until dusk.) It was impossible not to buy into its unique beauty. But what really struck me was the realisation that this land of abundance and efficiency is only three hours away from Mumbai, and much easier to reach than many parts of India. It's easy to find fault, but one truth keeps coming back to me: Dubai is a world-class city constructed in a massive desert. It is a testament to great vision, execution that relies on an audacious determination, and a capacity to remain thick-skinned, believing it will have the last laugh. This always fills me with awe (and what-ifs). There are simpler reasons I enjoy Dubai too: It's the perfect three-day break. I can get from my home in Mumbai to The Address Downtown in about six hours (and regain 1.5 hours' in time difference). My girlfriends and I can shop, party, spend the next day at a fantastic event like Art Dubai, or on an amazing local food tour, or at a concert, and then wind down at a spa before returning. That's pretty fantastic. So, if you're a Dubai fan like I am, flip through these pages to know what's new and buzzing right now. And for the skeptics, flip first to page 48, where you'll find 25 cool things to do that don't involve any malls. With that, I rest my case.

Divia Thani

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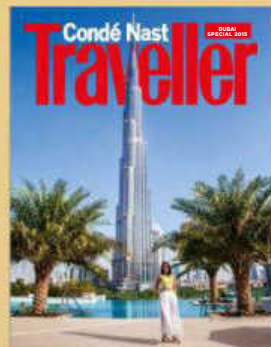
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One&Only The Palm, Dubai



THE COVER

Model: **Veronica/Bareface** Photograph: **Christopher List** Styling: **StyleCracker.com & Yogeshwari Singh** Make-up: **Nadine Elias/Bareface** Hair: **Jehna Mahoney** On model: peek-a-Boo crop top, **Madison**, high slit palazzos, **Madison**, eyewear, **Tod's**, ribbon tassel chic necklace, **Just Jewellery**, 'Jordann' buckled ankle strap block heel sandal, **Dune**, metallic double wrist cuff with chain, **Bansri**, Location: **Sofitel Dubai Downtown**



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NEW IN DUBAI

Dubai's latest wave of concept eateries are worth a visit, says **Delna Prakashan**

HEALTH EATERIES COMPTOIR 102

Tucked away within a boutique furniture and fashion store on Jumeirah Beach road, this quaint café serves food and drinks made from the freshest organic and local ingredients available—every bite will tell you so. The menu is loaded with smoothies, juices and salads. It's the kind of place where you can happily spend a quiet afternoon reading, while nibbling on an avocado crostini or sipping an almond milk latte. (www.comptoir102.com)



Clockwise from left: interiors of Comptoir 102; healthy mousse at Comptoir 102; Emmanuelle Sawko and Alexandra de Montaudouin, founders of Comptoir 102

COCO YOGO

Founder Turner Francis creates a range of coconut-based desserts, including coconut butters, coconut ice creams

and vegan cheesecakes, all of which are 100 percent plant-based, and free of egg, corn, gluten, dairy, soy, refined sugar and preservatives. The Chocolate Dream deserves a special mention. (www.nutritina.com)

THE PROTEIN BAKESHOP

Even Dubai's leading nutritionist, Rashi Chowdhary, has sugar cravings! And, that's how a series of heavenly tasting yet healthy desserts, protein snacks and Paleo eats was created. You can order them online; our favourites are almond cookies and protein-packed chocolate truffles. (www.theproteinbakeshop.com)

77VEGGIE BOUTIQUE

It all started with a mother experimenting with dozens of different vegetables to create healthy dinner options. Now, it's a restaurant space for the health conscious. Located in the Jumeirah Lake Towers, the 77Veggie Boutique sources most of its ingredients from local farms in the emirate, and prepares low-cal food without the use of freezers or fryers. Try the Non-Fried Slimmer's Samosas, a guilt-free rendition of the popular desi snack. (www.77veggie.com)

THE CYCLE BISTRO

Paleo chicken tikka masala with cauliflower saffron rice—doesn't sound quite right? It does to a community that

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MONTGOMERIE DUBAI | THE PALACE DOWNTOWN DUBAI



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WHERE *life* HAPPENS



SALT, one of the most popular food trucks in Dubai; clockwise: a dish at Cycle Bistro; The Melt Frozen Yogurt truck

feels at home in the city's first 100 percent Paleo café. It just got a lot easier to stick to your diet. (www.facebook.com/thecyclebistro)

MAKE BUSINESS HUB

Great coffee and cerebral conversations in an eclectic, urban and ergonomic café—you can't help but feel this is the next big thing. MAKE is a dream workspace for freelancers, entrepreneurs and creative-types. And to top it all, the food is pure genius. (www.makebusinesshub.com)

SWEET CONNECTION

Enjoy unique breads at this gluten-free kitchen and café (we like the olive, feta and rosemary loaf). You can also pick up on-the-go treats like the double chocolate mocha biscotti or the family-friendly favourite, the cake loaf. (www.sweetconnectiondubai.com/Welcome)

THE AÇAÍ SPOT

The Brazilian acai berry is celebrated as a superfood, and you can now enjoy its healthy goodness in the middle of the desert! Packed with vitamins and countless health benefits, the berry finds its way into granola, greek yogurt, and other dishes. Or, just enjoy the acai pulp in a mug. There are also magazines and board games to keep you entertained in this tastefully decorated two-storey café. (www.theacaipspotcafe.com)

BESTRO

Embark on a new journey in raw foodism at



Bestro, at The Dubai Mall's Lafayette Gourmet. Be prepared for a surprising food encounter, if you're a raw food virgin: food is served fast and mostly cold, as there is no cooking involved. Scared? Then dive directly into the dessert menu for an amazing chocolate fondant. (www.facebook.com/BeStroUAE)

CONCEPT CAFÉS THE SUM OF US

At this sourdough bakery and gourmet café, everything is made from scratch, including the bread. It's also home to the best scrambled eggs in town. (www.facebook.com/thesumofusdubai)

SCOOP! CAFÉ

Of course, the world's most expensive ice cream is made in Dubai. At AED3,000 (₹52,190) per scoop, The Black Diamond is made with Madagascar vanilla, rare Iranian saffron and black Italian truffle. Delicately sprinkled 23ct edible gold gives it the finishing touch.

What's more, you can keep the Versace

bowl and spoon as a memento. If you don't want to break the bank, however, the other gourmet ice creams and handcrafted chocolates are also excellent. (www.scoopcafe.com)

KIF KIF

This Moroccan-style resto-café dishes out a great chicken tagine flavoured with Moroccan lemon. (www.kifkif.com)

FOOD TRUCKS VIDA

The shiny silver 23ft long Airstream Safari truck parked outside Manzil Downtown Dubai offers popular street foods, salads and light lunches. (www.vida-hotels.com)

SALT

Follow SALT on Instagram (the food truck's only marketing platform) to find its Wagyu beef burgers, fries and shakes. (@findsalt)

PANIFICO

We like the Thai green chicken curry wrap at this sandwich shop. (www.panifico.me)

MELT FROZEN YOGURT

Melt's legendary frozen yogurts and ice lollies can be found on the move in a green-and-white striped truck that draws crowds. (www.facebook.com/meltfrozenyogurt)

BROOKLYN BROS

From the streets of Times Square to the shimmering lanes of Dubai comes a yellow van delivering artisanal hot dogs smothered in cool ingredients like buffalo wing sauce, basil and celery. (www.brooklynbros.com)

JAKE'S

A throwback to the days of slicked-back hair and bell bottoms, this truck serves bagels and fries. Track it with the hashtag #SpotJakes on social media. (www.facebook.com/TheFoodTruckDubai)



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HOTELS AND RESORTS

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Dubai is a land of many wonders, and some of the most luxurious addresses you will ever live at. Like the city's top five hotels, a part of luxury hotel chain The Address Hotels + Resorts. After all, as their tag line goes, this is "where life happens"

DOWNTOWN STATE OF MIND

When you arrive at the centre of this decadent city, you'll see buildings not as buildings, but as landscape formations between ground and sky. One such formation is **The Address Downtown Dubai** which stands an impressive 63-storeys high. Every balcony of each of the 196 lavish rooms serves as a vantage point for spectacular views of the adjacent Burj Khalifa and the enchanting Old Town. The property's obsession with visual sensations extends to architecturally complex pastries served in the lobby coffee shop. And beyond the hotel's glassed-in penthouse lounge, Neos, its luxe spa or its creative room service menu, if we had to choose one special thing that makes this iconic property a must-visit, it would have to be its critically acclaimed, award-winning modern steak restaurant—Cut by Wolfgang Puck.



JUST AROUND THE CORNER

Imagine living in a hotel that directly connects you to one of the world's largest shopping emporiums—The Dubai Mall. If you stay at **The Address Dubai Mall**, you can literally hop, skip and jump into this shopper's paradise. And after a long day of picking up an extra suitcase's worth of amazing designer goodies, you can simply turn the corner and be back in the comfort of your luxurious hotel room. The hotel itself is a style statement with 244 signature rooms and suites, all chic in design and luxurious in stay. You can even opt to stay in service apartments, a part of the hotel's many offerings.

LIVE LIFE KING SIZE

When you're in the city and looking to escape the concrete jungle, walk into **The Palace Downtown Dubai** and be amazed. An Arabian palace situated at the foot of Burj Khalifa, the architectural contrast is pleasing and most of all the hotel's 242 rooms featuring Middle Eastern themes offer stunning views of this imposing monument as well as the gorgeous Dubai Fountain. Not only are the ambiance and views captivating, but this jewel of the Address Hotels + Resorts' crown offers some of the best and most varied culinary options. From Thai specialities to Arabic and Oriental cuisines, there's even an Argentina steak house and a special tea lounge where you can indulge in the choicest of brews.

A LOCAL AFFAIR

Away from the hustle and bustle of Dubai's downtown, the Dubai Marina puts on quite a show of its own. And right in the middle of it lies the luxury haven—**The Address Dubai Marina**. Housed at one of the most enviable locations in the world's largest of its kind marina, overlooking the water and in the heart of the buzzing neighbourhood, its 200 rooms and suites are modern and its youthful approach is reflected in the hotel's

lively restaurants and popular lounge bars.

The best part: this is one of the few parts of Dubai in which you can walk, cycle or even catch a water-taxi. What's more, you'll feel perfectly in tune with the city thanks to its vibrant community and colourful surroundings of pavement cafes, local restaurants and shisha hotspots.

DUBAI'S PLAYGROUND

While Dubai may have many of the largest, biggest and tallest landmarks, Dubai is also home to one of the most idyllic golf retreats—**The Address Montgomerie Dubai**. Arrive here for the most memorable golf experiences in the Middle East with a sprawling 7,396-yard, 18-hole championship course designed by Colin Montgomerie, in association with Desmond Muirhead. The retreat also features 21 five-star hotel rooms, three international restaurants and a world-class fitness centre. So whether you're an avid golfer, a connoisseur of upscale dining or simply want to relax in the many luxuries this hotel has to offer—you know which address to check into.

For more information, visit
www.theaddress.com



A-Z

OF DOWNTOWN DUBAI

CNT puts together the only directory you need to discover Dubai's hippest neighbourhood



ARMANI HOTEL DUBAI

For those who think Dubai is all about bling, a visit to the Armani hotel is all that's needed to change their minds. Occupying eight floors (plus levels 38 and 39, which are dedicated to a single signature suite) of the amazing Burj Khalifa skyscraper, the hotel is a tribute and testament to the famous Italian designer's trademark minimal style. From chocolates to stationery, every article bears Mr Armani's name and aesthetic. It's all muted and luxurious, but in a refined way. Well, except for the floor-to-ceiling windows in all bedrooms, which showcase Downtown Dubai's always glittering, ever-changing skyline. (www.armanihotels.com)



BURJ KHALIFA

The world's tallest building at 828 metres and more than 160 stories, Burj Khalifa is awe-inspiring. But it's far from being a distant monument: you can live inside it, eat and drink within it, work in it or even work out in it! We recommend sunset cocktails at At.mosphere on its 122nd floor, as well as a trip to the

Observation Deck two floors above. There are also 900 private homes at The Residence at Burj Khalifa, many occupied by famous names. The Park consists of 11 hectares of greenery and water features, including The Dubai Fountain. (www.burjkhalifa.ae)



CLUBS

Armani/Prive, Vanity Club and Toy Room

at the Al Murooj Rotana, as well as Boutiq Ultra Lounge at The Address Dubai Mall are some of Dubai's most happening nightclubs, and they're all located in Downtown Dubai. Go ahead and party the night away. You know you want to!



DUBAI MALL

The world's largest mall boasts more than 1,200 stores, an ice rink,

aquarium, cinema, and events that take place throughout the year. But it's not just about the size; it's also about the mix: you'll find high-street brands from across the US and Europe, high-end fashion and accessories labels from France and Italy, and local UAE labels at S*uce. You'll also find major department stores like Bloomingdale's and Galeries Lafayette, and shops for electronics, food, furniture and home accents. Look for special offers during Ramadan and Dubai Shopping Festival and wear comfy shoes. (www.thedubaimall.com)



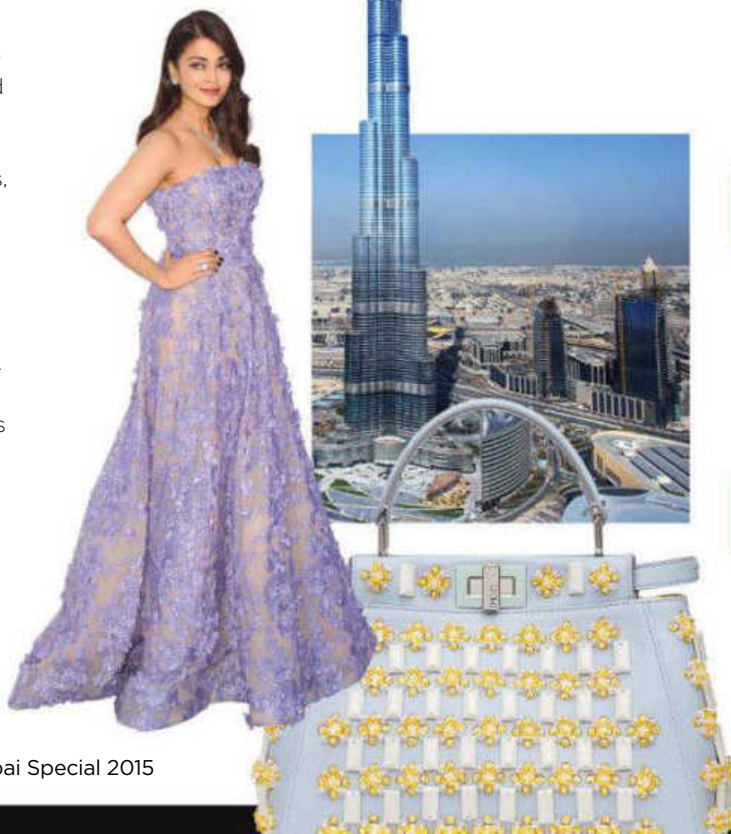
ELIE SAAB

Want to dress like the stars? Lebanese designer Elie Saab is a favourite of A-listers such as Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Rihanna, Mila Kunis and Katy Perry; and this Dubai store is his flagship. (www.thedubaimall.com)



FENDI

This year, fashion legend Karl Lagerfeld celebrates 50 years as creative director of Italian brand Fendi: insiders say it's fashion's longest-surviving marriage. (www.thedubaimall.com)





Armani Hotel, Dubai Opposite page clockwise:
**Burj Khalifa; Fendi, one of the many luxe
brands available at The Dubai Mall;
Aishwarya Rai Bachchan in Elie Saab**



GIFT CARD

If the idea of browsing through hundreds of stores to find the perfect gift fills you with dread, opt for an Emaar Gift Card instead. You can load it with amounts starting from AED50 and use it across Downtown Dubai—everywhere from The Dubai Mall, The Address hotel, spas and restaurants to KidZania, The Dubai Aquarium and Underwater Zoo, the ice rink, SEGA Republic and even Reel Cinemas. What's more, use of the card entitles you to special discounts and benefits. (www.emaargiftcard.com)



HUMMINGBIRD BAKERY

Founded in London's Notting Hill back in 2004, Hummingbird Bakery made American-home-style baking staples (like cupcakes, cheesecakes, brownies and pies) famous in the UK. Today, the only place you'll find their delicious red velvet cupcakes outside the UK is right here in Dubai. (ae.hummingbirdbakery.com)



ICE RINK

An Olympic-sized ice skating rink in the middle of the desert? Where else but in Dubai? Take skating lessons at the academy, perfect your technique with a private coach, play ice hockey or try out broomball (similar to ice hockey, except you'll use a rubber broom to push the ball into the goal) with friends! For a fun night out, try disco skating: the soundtrack is less 70s hits and more contemporary hip hop, R&B and chartbusters. (www.dubaicerink.com)



JO MALONE

This exquisite brand of fragrances was started by a British florist/beautician, when the homemade nutmeg and ginger bath oil she gifted her clients took off. Today, Jo Malone, available at The Dubai Mall, has more than 60 exquisite combinations (we love the lime, basil and mandarin, and white jasmine with mint) that you can wear on your body as perfumes, oils and lotions, or keep around your home as candles, soaps and linen sprays. (www.jomalone.com)



KIDZANIA

This interactive, award-winning edutainment centre lets children experiment with more than 80 different careers, from surgeons and firefighters to chefs, engineers,



models, actors, artists, TV hosts, jewellery designers and even mechanics. Kids under two enter for free, and adults must be accompanied by a child to enter! (www.thedubaimall.com)



LEVEL SHOE DISTRICT

If you're a shoe-lover, welcome to paradise. The Dubai Mall's Level Shoe District is 96,000 sq ft dedicated to shoe fashion, art and design. There are more than 300 always-current designer collections, 40 boutiques, even dedicated shoe stylists and shoppers, an on-site cobbler and foot masseuse! From global favourites like Manolo Blahnik, Christian Louboutin and Brian Atwood to local picks like Nadine Kanso, limited collections such as Pharrell William for Adidas and Oscar de la Renta's gem-studded mules for Ramadan, it's all here under one roof. Earlier this year, Level also introduced an exclusive Bridal Collection, perfect if you're planning for your perfect Cinderella moment. Nicholas Kirkwood's bridal shoe features more than 600 half Arabian pearls. Just say, "I do!" (www.levelshoedistrict.com)



MANZIL DOWNTOWN DUBAI

This hotel, like its sister Vida, is situated in a brilliant location in Downtown Dubai. What makes it unique is its approach: distinctly Arabian in its design, it caters to today's young, independent and global travellers. It manages to be both authentic to its setting and yet thoroughly modern. Its in-house bar/restaurant Nezesaussi Grill (short for New Zealand, South Africa and Australia), is unsurprisingly a sports hub where fans gather to watch big games. (We like to think the 'i' at the end stands for India when that game is cricket.) (www.vida-hotels.com)



NEOS

This glitzy bar on the 63rd floor of The Address Downtown hotel is a *Condé Nast Traveller* favourite: the views of the Burj Khalifa and shimmering Dubai skyline are unbeatable, the music upbeat, the cocktails perfectly mixed, and the crowd is always young, well-heeled and up for a good time. Happy hours run daily, 6 to 9pm. This is where the party is at. (www.theaddress.com)





Zafar of Emad Carpets, one of 1,200 stores in The Dubai Mall. Opposite page clockwise: interiors of Neos at The Address; The Dubai Mall; Oscar Tiye Sandals available at Level Shoe District; red velvet cupcake at the Hummingbird Bakery



Infinity pool at The Address Downtown Dubai.
Opposite clockwise: interiors of Switch at Dubai
Mall; TWG Tea Salon & Boutique is great for a
tea break between shopping; Oscar de la
Renta, available in The Dubai Mall

OSCAR DE LA RENTA

Until the 2,000-seat Dubai Opera opens its doors in 2016 (along with The Opera District, which will house museums and art hotels), O belongs to the late Oscar de la Renta, designer to the celebrities, including Amal Clooney, who wore one of his last creations for her Venice wedding ceremony. (www.thedubaimall.com)

POOLS

There are pools, and then there's the five-tiered infinity pool at The Address Downtown Dubai. Boasting the Asian fusion restaurant Zeta, unmatched views of Burj Khalifa and a separate children's pool, there isn't a better way to cool off. But if you want to truly get away, enjoy a cocktail or two in your very own private cabana. (www.theaddress.com)

QIX CLUB

Do you need a quick shopping trip or just a blissful hour at the amazing spa? The Address Dubai Mall has a solution: drop the kids off at its exclusive, in-house Qix Club. It caters to kids ages five to 12, and offers a range of entertainment (including several toys and, thankfully, a PlayStation!) and activities such as wall-climbing. It also has a daily schedule of movies, storytelling, arts and craft, dance and music. Don't you love it when they think of everything? (www.theaddress.com)

REAL ESTATE

People like to joke about Dubai being India's cleanest city, but the truth is, you do feel very much at home when you visit. Part of this has to do



The world-famous industrial designer, whose work can be seen in New York's MoMA and Centre Pompidou in France, wanted this Dubai venue to be true to its name—a 'switch' from one's daily routine that takes one on a journey. (www.thedubaimall.com)

TWIG TEA SALON & BOUTIQUE

Think of a luxury afternoon tea, but without the fuss and pretentiousness. TWG (The Wellness Group) Tea was founded in Singapore and retails more than 800 fine teas and accessories, and manages exquisite tea salons where people mingle and linger for hours. Even the gastronomy is tea-influenced: 1837 Green Tea infused vinaigrette salad; pasta with basil tomato sauce with Moroccan mint tea; and Earl Grey chocolate macaroons. Desis who enjoy their strong cuppa will especially love the robust black chai with aromatic Indian spices. (www.thedubaimall.com)



with how many Indian expats you see all over the city, and an increasing number of them live there for part of the year. Real estate in Dubai isn't cheap, but there are a wide range of options if you're looking to invest. In Downtown Dubai, for instance, BLVD Heights is modelled on Chicago skyscrapers; The Lofts evoke New York-style living with spacious, light-filled studio apartments; South Ridge is exceptionally family-friendly with swimming pools, play areas, golf simulators and squash courts. For truly high-class living, there are 'Residences in the Sky'. (www.emaar.com)

SWITCH

How often do you see neon walls with Arabic script on the ceiling? Karim Rashid's rockstar sense of design is splashed bright and bold in this unique restaurant.



U UNDERWATER ZOO

The Dubai Aquarium and

Underwater Zoo has a 10-million litre tank filled with thousands of aquatic animals (more than 300 sharks and rays) and presents the opportunity to interact with them in myriad ways: from cage snorkelling to shark walking. You can also capture your underwater experiences for posterity with their Go Pro professional cameras. New to the tank is the King Croc, weighing a whopping 750kgs and measuring over 5m in length. (www.thedubaiaquarium.com)



V VIDA DOWNTOWN DUBAI HOTEL

The new Vida Downtown Dubai, like its sister hotel Manzil, represents a new breed of hospitality: Arabian in design but global and urban in ethos, catering to dynamic, young travellers. Already, this property has become a hotspot: it's home to a cool 1960s Airstream food truck, and also to La Serre Bistro & Boulangerie, a light-filled venue for traditional French favourites and freshly baked breads and pastry items. Go early on weekends, as it always attracts a big following of fans. And finally, there's Toko, which offers a modern yet authentic take on Japanese 'izakaya' dining. (www.vida-hotels.com)



W WOLFGANG PUCK'S CUT

Celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck's chain of CUT restaurants is world renowned, with outposts in Las Vegas, Singapore, Beverly Hills and London. This modern American restaurant caters to true steak connoisseurs, offering prime dry and wet-aged beef from the US, Australia, and of course, Wagyu from Japan. So seriously does CUT take this meat, it places all focus on it, using painstaking yet simple techniques for grilling to ensure the ingredient remains the true star of the dish. (Of course, the menu does provide other choices, from fish to lobster, but beef really is what CUT's best for.) (www.theaddress.com)

X XERJOFF

On Level 1 of The Dubai Mall, Italian luxury perfume maker Xerjoff offers a range of bespoke fragrances,

which use ingredients sourced from around the world: aquilaria agallocha, a highly-priced, fragrant resin from Meghalaya, aromatic olive oil from Italy and Shunkoin cherry flowers from Japan. (www.xerjoff.com)

Y YELDIZLAR

This much-loved casual Lebanese café offers authentic Middle Eastern mezze, served with fresh salads and warm bread. Similar to Reem Al Bawadi (a *Condé Nast Traveller* favourite), this is a laid-back setting for easy, affordable food and grape-mint shisha. (www.yeldizlar.com)

Z ZOGA YOGA CAFE

Zoga is more than just a studio: it's a destination that embodies a complete zen lifestyle. There's a coffee and juice bar as well as clothes and accessories for sale in its boutique, but it's really a place where like-minded people gather to connect and recharge. Classes range from the usual Ashtanga and Hatha to the more exotic Candlelight Vinyasa, face yoga and even backbending workshops. (www.zoga.ae)

Clockwise: Wolfgang Puck's CUT, the celebrated restaurant at The Address; yoga practice at Zoga will set you up for the long day ahead; Vida Downtown Dubai Hotel





A walk through the Dubai Aquarium and Underwater Zoo is perfect for kids and grownups

Hyatt Hotels — High on Dubai

With six operational hotels, and more in the pipeline, Hyatt's focus on riding the growth wave in Dubai continues with the introduction of its popular Hyatt Place brand and the opening of a second Hyatt Regency hotel in Dubai Healthcare City.

Dubai is fast becoming the most sought after business and leisure mecca in the Middle East. Its astounding growth trajectory has ensured the presence of high-powered international businesses, luxury brands and modern hotels that suit every budget and requirement. According to the UAE's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing statistics, there are 91 hotels and 41 hotel apartments set to launch by 2016 in Dubai alone.

Having established itself as one of the earliest hospitality brands in Dubai in 1980 with the popular Hyatt Regency Dubai, Hyatt has focused its Middle East growth strategy on Dubai and neighbouring Abu Dhabi. Currently there are 6 operational Hyatt hotels in Dubai across four brands. These include the well-established Park Hyatt Dubai, Grand Hyatt Dubai, Hyatt Regency Dubai and more recent additions: Hyatt Regency Dubai Creek Heights, Hyatt Place Dubai/AI Rigga and Hyatt Place Dubai/Baniyas Square.

Located in Deira, in the traditional heart of Dubai, the two new Hyatt Place hotels have popularised this upscale, stylish, uncomplicated and comfortable brand among leisure and business travellers who enjoy the hustle and bustle of souks, busy streets and ethnic restaurants. Hyatt Place branded hotels in Dubai are designed for the busy lifestyle of today's multi-tasking traveller, and their families, featuring a selected range of services aimed at providing casual hospitality in a well-designed, high-tech and contemporary environment. "The fastest growing brand in Hyatt's global portfolio, Hyatt Place hotels offer style, innovation, 24/7 convenience and every modern comfort to create a seamless stay," said Pablo





Hyatt Place Dubai/ Baniyas Square 24x7 Gallery

Graf, senior vice president of operations, Hyatt International Southwest Asia.

Hyatt Place hotel's spacious guestrooms come with the signature Cozy Corner, Hyatt's luxurious Grand Bed, a separate workspace, and a full range of high-quality products and facilities. The Dubai hotels also feature a fully-equipped 24-hour StayFit Gym and swimming pool, free breakfast in the Gallery Kitchen, a 24/7 Gallery Menu and Market, public computers with high speed internet, and free Wi-Fi.

A short distance from the bustle of Deira, the second Hyatt Regency-branded hotel in Dubai is only 10 minutes from Dubai's international airport. Opened in Q1 2015, Hyatt Regency Dubai Creek Heights has 3,200 sq mt of function space including Al Manzil, an exclusive residential style multi-event enclave. The hotel offers in-house and conference guests spacious guestrooms and suites (including two lavish penthouse Royal Suites) and luxurious spa facilities at NYSA Spa. These include a Water Temple, a traditional Hammam, an outdoor pool and serene and spacious treatment rooms. Exciting dining options include Sufra, a buffet-style restaurant with cuisine from the Levant, Market24, a 24-hour gourmet deli offering an authentic and modern approach to the classic pastry and coffee shop and La Tablita, a fun and exciting Mexican-themed restaurant presenting home-style

cuisine that celebrates the festive spirit of Mexico.

An hour away in beautiful Abu Dhabi, Grand Hyatt Abu Dhabi Hotel and Residences Emirates Pearl will join Park Hyatt Abu Dhabi Hotel and Resort and Hyatt Capital Gate Abu Dhabi to become the third Hyatt hotel to open in the UAE capital. It will also introduce the dramatic Grand Hyatt brand to the city.

For further information, please visit www.hyatt.com



Hyatt Place Dubai/ Baniyas Square Guestroom



Hyatt Regency Dubai Creek Heights- Lobby



PHOTOGRAPHS: DAN KULLBERG

Outdoor space at the Four Seasons opposite: lobby at Armani Hotel Dubai

THE HOTEL HOT LIST

Dubai is no stranger to the bold, the beautiful and the extravagant.
Esperança de Souza brings you a roundup of places to stay, whether
you're in the city for business or pleasure



DIFC/SHEIKH ZAYED ROAD CONRAD DUBAI

Best for: Business

In close proximity to the financial district, this sleek and chic hotel, with a flower-filled lobby, is a firm favourite. (www.conraddubai.com; from AED690 or ₹12,000)

CNT Tip: Friday brunch at Ballarò is great if you enjoy Mediterranean cuisine and jazz.

FAIRMONT DUBAI

Best for: Business

A solid reputation, first-class service, direct connections to the city metro and a walkway to the Dubai International Convention & Exhibition Centre ensure a steady stream of corporate guests at this stately hotel. That it is home to Cavalli Club and Cirque du Soleil doesn't hurt at all. (www.fairmont.com; from AED799 or ₹13,840)

JUMEIRAH EMIRATES TOWERS

Best for: Girls' getaways, Business

This well-located hotel's dining options are plenty, including London's The Ivy and Hakkasan. (www.jumeirah.com; from AED840 or ₹14,600)

CNT Tip: Women will absolutely love the Chopard Ladies King Room, featuring a cosmetics refrigerator.

THE RITZ-CARLTON, DIFC

Best for: Business

This hotel tucked away behind the skyscrapers makes it easy to rub shoulders with the city's movers and shakers. For an art fix, head to the galleries at DIFC. (www.ritzcarlton.com; from AED950 or ₹16,450)

CNT Tip: A tribute to the 1920s with its Art Deco design, Café Belge at DIFC is great for jazz.

SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, DUBAI

Best for: Business

Shangri-La's signature hospitality ensures service and comfort. Dine at the charming Hoi An for Vietnamese fare, or Shang Palace for delicious Cantonese cuisine. The Act



Dubai is perfect for a memorable evening. (www.shangri-la.com; from AED925 or ₹16,013)

KEMPINSKI HOTEL MALL OF THE EMIRATES

Best for: Family holidays, Girls' getaways

Attached to Mall of the Emirates, this is a familiar retreat, especially for shopaholics. Its 15 ski chalets offer great views of Ski Dubai. (www.kempinski.com; from AED975 or ₹17,000)

DUSIT THANI DUBAI

Best for: Business

Dusit Thani's spacious rooms with rich, Thai interiors, and rooftop pool anchor it as a favourite. Plus, Benjarong is still one of Dubai's best Thai restaurants. (www.dusit.com; from AED540 or ₹9,350)

CNT Tip: Go through the door hidden in the bookcase of the lobby; you'll find yourself in Nippon Bottle Company, a 'speakeasy' featuring Japanese whisky, beer and cocktails.

DOWNTOWN DUBAI THE ADDRESS DOWNTOWN DUBAI

Best for: Girls' getaways, Business

Striking both inside and out, the hotel is the perfect starting point for an invigorating urban adventure. There isn't anything sleeker, sexier or more stylish out there. (www.theaddress.com; from AED1,499 or ₹26,000)

CNT Tip: Calabar is unbeatable for views of the Dubai Fountains—we suggest you go early to nab the perfect perch.

THE ADDRESS DUBAI MALL

Best for: Girls' getaways

Perfectly positioned to partake of Dubai Mall's many delights, from stores to cinemas to eateries, this is an elegant gem in the very heart of Downtown Dubai. (www.theaddress.com; from AED1,399 or ₹24,350)

CNT Tip: Use the hotel's direct passageway to Dubai Mall and make a beeline for Fashion Avenue; you won't regret it.

MANZIL DOWNTOWN DUBAI

Best for: Business

Manzil racks up top marks for its prime location. Plus, it boldly forgoes bling and showcases contemporary Arabesque design instead. (www.vida-hotels.com; from AED809 or ₹14,000)

CNT Tip: For mezze and shisha, head to The Courtyard, the best-kept secret in the city.

VIDA DOWNTOWN DUBAI

Best for: Business, Romantic breaks

This chic new hotel is already a hotspot: go to Toko Dubai for contemporary Japanese food, and La Serre Bistro & Boulangerie for a taste of Paris. Head there early on weekends; this place draws a crowd but it's worth the wait. (www.vida-hotels.com; from AED899 or ₹14,000)

THE PALACE DOWNTOWN DUBAI

Best for: Family holidays, Weddings

This hotel effortlessly merges Arabian traditional design with modern amenities. Palatial rooms offer mesmerising views of the Dubai Fountains. (www.theaddress.com; from AED1,199 or ₹20,800)

CNT Tip: Relax over shisha at Ewaan's serene, beautiful palm-lined poolside.

ARMANI HOTEL DUBAI

Best for: Romantic breaks

Haute and happening, Armani is located at Burj Khalifa, one of the world's tallest buildings. In contrast to the glossy exterior, a restrained, minimal aesthetic is employed indoors, courtesy designer Giorgio Armani. Enjoy the novelty of having a lifestyle manager (some with their very own assistants!) to pander to your every whim. (www.armanihotels.com; from AED1,700 or ₹29,434)

CNT Tip: A minimum two-night stay gets you an airport pickup and drop-off in a sleek Bentley. As they say, when in Dubai...

For more on Downtown Dubai, see page 14



PHOTOGRAPH: DAN KULLBERG

The Address Dubai Mall
opposite: Jumeirah
Emirates Towers



The outdoor pool at Zabeel Saray Opposite: a room at Anantara Dubai The Palm Resort & Spa

PALM JUMEIRAH JUMEIRAH ZABEEL SARAY

Best for: Weddings, Romantic breaks

Grand Anatolian references are abundant across the resort's 443 rooms, suites and villas while the Talise Ottoman Spa makes for a lavish treat. The ballrooms are equally majestic. (www.jumeirah.com; from AED990 or ₹17,200)

ANANTARA DUBAI THE PALM RESORT & SPA

Best for: Family holidays

Vaulted ceilings, vibrant colours and three lagoon pools catapult this relative newcomer onto every jet-setter's must-stay list. (www.dubai-palm.anantara.com; from AED1,403 or ₹24,285)

CNT Tip: Kids under 12 will love the Tuk Tuk Kids Club and teens can have a crack at billiards.

ATLANTIS THE PALM, DUBAI

Best for: Family holidays, Weddings

With its numerous restaurants and activities, you'll never run out of thing to do. Kids adore the Aquaventure Waterpark, while adults may prefer culinary delights at Nobu and Ossiano. (www.atlantisthepalm.com; from AED1,635 or ₹28,300)

CNT Tip: For a unique stay, try an underwater suite.

FOUR SEASONS RESORT DUBAI AT JUMEIRAH BEACH

Best for: Family holidays, Romantic breaks

This resort's 237 plush rooms have a California-inspired, easy but stylish vibe. Views boast the beach or Dubai skyline. Coya and Nusret are brilliant restaurants. (www.fourseasons.com; from AED1,687 or ₹29,200)

CNT Tip: No kids? Head straight for the adults-only pool.

WALDORF ASTORIA DUBAI PALM JUMEIRAH

Best for: Family holidays

The swanky hotel ticks all the



right boxes, but the highlight is unique flavours created by Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck at Social. (www.waldorfastoria3.hilton.com; from AED750 or ₹13,000)

ONE&ONLY THE PALM

Best for: Romantic breaks, Weddings

Think indulgence: the pool and beach are true oases; the spa exquisite and the entire setting Instagram-friendly. (www.thepalm.oneandonlyresorts.com; from AED2,210 or ₹38,2700)

RIXOS THE PALM DUBAI

Best for: Family holidays

A new contender on The Palm Jumeirah, this plush resort seamlessly merges an eastern and western aesthetic. The 230 rooms and suites all offer sigh-worthy panoramic views and the 10 acres of private beach allows for plenty of sun, sand and surf. (thepalmdubai.rixos.com; from AED1,100 or ₹19,150)

CNT Tip: Spendthrifts will relish The Bucket List package that includes a whirl on a seaplane to view The Palm Jumeirah and the World Islands.

MARINA AND JUMEIRAH BEACH GROSVENOR HOUSE, A LUXURY COLLECTION HOTEL, DUBAI

Best for: Romantic breaks

With two towers teeming with cosmopolitan dining venues, Grosvenor House is a top draw for Dubai's A-listers. Fine-dining picks include Indego by Vineet and pan-Latin cuisine at Toro Toro. For postprandial merriment, the party continues at Buddha Bar or the Siddharta Lounge by Buddha Bar. Both, great options for checking out the famous Dubai night scene. (www.grosvenorhouse-dubai.com; from AED700 or ₹12,120)

THE WESTIN DUBAI MINA SEYAH BEACH RESORT & MARINA

Best for: Family holidays

Calm and tranquil, the Westin exudes elegance. The rooms are fantastically comfortable thanks to the famous Heavenly Beds. (www.westinminaseyahi.com; from AED868 or ₹15,032)

THE ADDRESS DUBAI MARINA

Best for: Girls' getaways

With a fabulous location in the Marina, guests can experience Dubai's buzz. Don't miss Shades for incredible views (and selfies). (www.theaddress.com; from AED799 or ₹13,800)

CNT Tip: Pier 7 inside the Dubai Marina Mall right next door is ultra trendy.

THE RITZ-CARLTON, DUBAI

Best for: Family holidays, Weddings

Deftly combining tradition and modernity, The Ritz-Carlton makes for a refined stay. Be lazy and stay by the beach or pool, or give the wallet a workout at nearby boutiques. (www.ritzcarlton.com; from AED1,000 or ₹17,400)

THE ADDRESS MONTGOMERIE DUBAI

Best for: Weddings

Lush landscaping and elegant décor—need we say more? With only 21 boutique rooms, every need will be swiftly met. (www.theaddress.com; from AED649 or ₹11,300)

CNT Tip: Walk the greens not only to perfect your swing but for the dramatic views as well.

ONE&ONLY ROYAL MIRAGE

Best for: Family holidays, Romantic breaks, Weddings

The regal splendour is bolstered by top-notch service. Three different sections with stunning interiors, sprawling lawns and pools create an aura of seclusion. Très romantique? Oui! (royalmirage.oneandonlyresorts.com; from AED1,280 or ₹22,170)

CNT Tip: Canoodling couples might bump into celebrities at Residence & Spa's exclusive The Dining Room.

MADINAT JUMEIRAH

Best for: Family holidays, Girls' getaways, Weddings

There's something for everyone at this enchanting wonderland. With three breathtaking properties, palm-fringed canals, over 40 award-winning restaurants and boutiques

at Souk Madinat Jumeirah—guests won't have any reason to stray away from this splendid complex. (www.jumeirah.com; from AED810 or ₹14,100)

CNT Tip: Try the Suite Heels package, where a five-night stay lands you a pair of heels at Harvey Nichols.

JUMEIRAH BEACH HOTEL

Best for: Family holidays, Weddings

The signature 'wave' hotel with 20 multi-cuisine restaurants (including Jamie's Italian), luxurious rooms, suites and villas, and five pools, the hotel packs some serious punch. Kids will have their hands full at Sinbad's Kids Club and teens can stave off boredom at The Hub. (www.jumeirah.com; from AED1,232 or ₹21,450)

CNT Tip: Guests have free access to the Wild Wadi water park located next door.

BURJ AL ARAB JUMEIRAH

Best for: Romantic breaks

The sail-shaped Burj Al Arab takes over-the-top to new heights. Boundless luxury is conspicuous in the 24-carat gold embellishments, 202 luxurious duplex suites, private butler service and Hermès products. The staff-to-suite service is 8:1, hinting at the lengths taken to exceed expectations. (www.jumeirah.com; from AED4,995 or ₹87,000)

CNT Tip: Make a suitably grand entry by opting for the helicopter transfer.

CREEKSIDE/BUR DUBAI GRAND HYATT DUBAI

Best for: Business

Easy access to the heart of the city—on both sides of the Creek—and its proximity to the airport makes this the go-to place for business travellers. Sweeping vistas, 13 restaurants and bars, Dorfmueller duvets plus marble bathrooms all ensure complete comfort. (www.dubai.grand.hyatt.com; from AED1,318 or ₹22,825)



HYATT REGENCY DUBAI CREEK HEIGHTS

Best for: Family holidays, Business

The newest Hyatt Regency property has three separate fitness centres, a 24-hour grab-and-go deli, a Kids' Club and 464 rooms and suites. Perfect for family getaways and quick business trips, the hotel has the necessary (24-hour in-room dining) to the indulgent (two signature royal suites occupying a floor each). (www.dubaicreek.regency.hyatt.com; from AED500 or ₹8,700)

PARK HYATT DUBAI

Best for: Romantic breaks, Weddings

Sporting Arabesque flair coupled with Moroccan details, this blue-domed hotel is perfect for blissed-out honeymooners and couples, who will love the phenomenal Amara spa with its tropical outdoor showers. The spacious ballrooms and resort feel are perfect for destination weddings. (www.dubai.park.hyatt.com; from AED895 or ₹15,600)

CNT Tip: Partake in undoubtedly the best Friday brunch this side of the Creek at the outstanding Traiteur.

XVA GALLERY DUBAI

Best for: Romantic breaks

With a dearth of eclectic boutique hotels in Dubai, the XVA hotel is a unique gem in the historic Al Fahidi District. And what makes it even more interesting is its location, within a well-known art gallery. It features 10 individually designed rooms that showcase the region's cultural motifs and its pleasant courtyards are great for solitude-seekers. (www.xvahotel.com; from AED200 or ₹3,500)

AL MAHA RESORT

Best for: Romantic breaks

Inspired by Bedouin encampments, this is a genuinely romantic interlude deep in the Arabian desert. Crafted for ultimate luxury and privacy, the resort offers tent-shaped suites, each with its own private heated outdoor pool, scattered across the resort. Service is impeccable. (www.al-maha.com; from AED1,800 or ₹31,300)

CNT Tip: Learn the art of falconry, go for a camel trek or a desert drive to spot Arabian oryx and gazelles.

BUSINESS BAY JW MARRIOTT MARQUIS HOTEL DUBAI

Best for: Business

Staying at the world's tallest hotel certainly has a nice cachet to it. Elegant wood panelling in the rooms forms a fine counterpoint to the light flooding in from the floor-to-ceiling windows. Experience sublime meals at Atul Kochhar's fabulous Rang Mahal, or the Japanese Izakaya where the Wasabi Girl, attired as a harajuku doll, will grind fresh wasabi at your table. (www.marriott.com; from AED451 or ₹7,810)

CNT Tip: Vault on levels 71 and 72 offers some decidedly different views of Downtown Dubai's glittering cityscape.

TAJ DUBAI

Best for: Business

The all-new hotel boasts style and substance. Embark on a culinary adventure: explore Peruvian cuisine that's creating ripples around the globe, and tuck into moreish treats at Tesoro. The less adventurous can try the upscale The Eloquent Elephant for fanciful cocktails and gastro pub grub. (www.tajhotels.com; from AED650 or ₹11,250)

CNT Tip: For a truly regal experience, splash out on the exquisitely furnished Maharaja suite, complete with a terrace and butler service.

THE OBEROI, DUBAI

Best for: Business

The Oberoi's trademark design elements like space and light are a welcome relief in Dubai. The rooms feature hand-tufted rugs, original artwork by Mrinmoy Barua and sleek Italian marble in the bathrooms. Service is fantastic, and shuttles ply guests to The Dubai Mall at no extra charge. (www.oberoihotels.com; from AED800 or ₹14,000)

CNT Tip: For an edgy vibe, head to Iris on the rooftop, which reels in Dubai's fashionistas. 📍



The Oberoi, Dubai
Opposite: JW Marriott
Marquis Hotel Dubai

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WHERE TO FEAST IN DUBAI

The restaurant scene is ever-changing, spanning top international names and some homegrown hits. Here's where to eat (and be seen). By Alisha Patel

Dubai's culinary scene has certainly come into its own: in 2014, two restaurants, La Petite Maison and Zuma climbed further up the San Pellegrino's Top 100 list; there's been an influx of celebrity chefs from across the world; international cuisine is now available across different price segments; home-grown brands such as Table 9 by Nick and Scott have made their presence felt; and there's even a Zagat Guide for Dubai. But you're only in town for a short break and you've got a lot of shopping to do, so where should you go? And what should you order? We list the essentials. Eat here, or you're missing out.

ZUMA **Japanese**


The Dubai branch of chef Rainer Becker's string of izakaya-style Japanese restaurants is housed in the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) and is always buzzing. It dishes up innovative small plates of food (like fried soft-shell crab with wasabi mayo, and crispy squid with green chillies and lime) in a large downstairs restaurant; the upstairs lounge bar serves potent cocktails.

Dish to try: Salt-grilled sea bass with burnt tomato and ginger (www.zumarestaurant.com; meal for two from AED800 or ₹13,850)

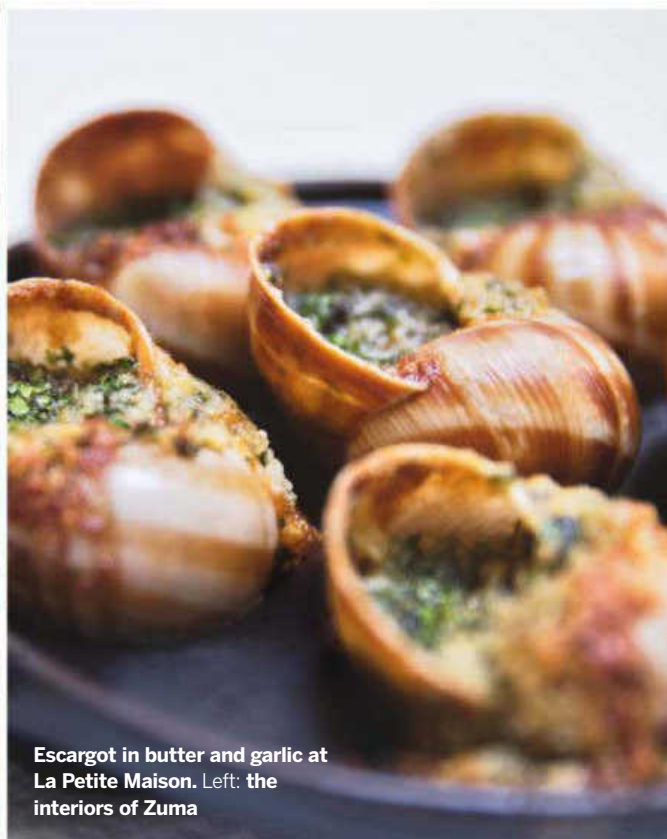
AL MAHARA **Seafood**

As if being located at the luxurious Burj Al Arab hotel wasn't novelty enough, the underwater Al Mahara has an incredible floor-to-ceiling aquarium right in the centre of it, featuring a wealth of colourful marine animals and plants, including sharks. The regal blue, gold and red colour scheme of the restaurant adds to its appeal.

Dish to try: Line-caught sea bass with jus piperade (www.jumeirah.com; meal for two from AED1,200 or ₹20,800)



A dish of rib-eye with wafu sauce and garlic chips at Zuma



Escargot in butter and garlic at La Petite Maison. Left: the interiors of Zuma

PAI THAI

Thai

Located at the Dar Al Masyaf Hotel, this Asian restaurant is accessible by an abra (water-taxi). It has wonderful views of the canal and top-notch food.

Dish to try: Gaeng kiew wan gai (green chicken curry)
(www.jumeirah.com; meal for two from AED400 or ₹6,900)

PIERCHIC

Contemporary Seafood

The romantic fine-dining restaurant at the Al Qasr hotel is situated at the end of a wooden, candlelit pier that stretches out into the ocean. On one side, you can see the Jumeirah shoreline, and on the other, the Burj Al Arab and the Arabian Gulf.

Dish to try: Roasted beef tenderloin with sautéed wild mushrooms, carrot and parsley
(www.jumeirah.com; meal for two from AED400 or ₹6,900)

ASADO

Argentinian

For an authentic La Parrilla meal, where premium meat cuts are prepared on an open grill, Asado is the top spot. It has a lovely terrace and a view of The Dubai Fountain.

Dish to try: Cabrito (roasted baby goat)
(www.theaddress.com; meal for two from AED600 or ₹10,400)

TABLE 9 BY NICK AND SCOTT

International

Gordon Ramsay protégés Scott Price and Nick Alvis stayed on in Dubai after Ramsay left, to create this European fine-dining restaurant, introducing a chef's table, a more casual style and one of the most innovative menus in the city.

Dish to try: Crispy egg
(+971 4212 7551; meal for two from AED450 or ₹7,800)

BICE

Italian

For a lovely meal in the Jumeirah Beach Resort area, head to BiCE at the Hilton Dubai, where the food and service are always terrific. An oil trolley—with a variety of high-quality olive oils to drizzle over your dish—should tell you just how seriously this restaurant, with branches across the globe, takes its food.

Dish to try: Home-made ricotta and spinach tortelli with creamy white truffle sauce and black truffle brunoise
(www.hilton.com; meal for two from AED400 or ₹6,900)

STAY

French

Arguably the best restaurant at the One&Only The Palm, STAY (the acronym for Simple Table Alléno Yannick) is fronted

by chef Yannick Alléno, who earned his three Michelin stars while working at Hotel Le Meurice in Paris, and won two more at Cheval Blanc in Courchevel. Yannick's food arrives in well-sized portions (barring the fish mains) but, be warned, it can be pretty heavy on the wallet.

Dish to try: Black Angus beef tenderloin 'Café de Paris'
(www.thepalm.oneandonlyresorts.com; meal for two from AED600 or ₹10,400)

NOBU

Japanese fusion

If the quality that the name Nobu Matsuhisa has come to represent isn't enough reason to visit this restaurant, then we really don't know what is. The Japanese celebrity chef has 32 restaurants across five continents.

Dish to try: Black cod yuzu miso
(www.noburestaurants.com; meal for two from AED800 or ₹13,900)

INDEGO BY VINEET

Contemporary Indian

Michelin-starred chef Vineet Bhatia's contemporary Indian restaurant at Grosvenor House in Dubai should be a definite stop for anyone interested in learning about Indian food with a unique modern twist. Traditional spices are given a contemporary treatment in a truly flavourful menu.



An opulent Oasis

The Ritz-Carlton, Dubai, with its swanky interiors and lavish-new Presidential Suites, is drawing the attention of luxury connoisseurs from around the world

An iconic beachfront resort in the heart of the vibrant Dubai Marina district, The Ritz-Carlton, Dubai is redefining standards of luxury with its renovated interiors, breath-taking sea views and inimitable Arabian hospitality. While you're here, we recommend that you check into one-of-the-two new Presidential Suites, located on the fifth and sixth floor of the hotel's recently restored "Ghorroob" wing.

Measuring 2,368sq ft, each of these suites feature a private spa that comprises a hammam, a steam room and a dedicated treatment area where you'll be pampered with one-of-a-kind therapies. From the Royal Hammam Body Ritual and invigorating Citrus Body Burst Ritual to the indulgent Rejuvenating Diamond Body Ritual, where precious gems and diamond dust are used to balance your chakras, these suites make for a perfect escape from the bustling city life.

Apart from a unique in-room wellness experience, the Presidential

Suites also offer laundry and valet services, 24-hour in-room dining and all Ritz-Carlton Club Lounge privileges, some of which include a dedicated concierge, access to meeting rooms, complimentary culinary presentations and more.

While their contemporary décor subtly reflects arabesque aesthetics, these suites include exclusive dining areas, elegant living rooms with home-theatre systems, study spaces and al fresco sitting areas overlooking the Arabian Gulf. With two gracefully designed bedrooms, the master bedroom spells magnificence with floor-to-ceiling windows, separate dressing areas and walk-in closets.

If you're visiting Dubai, stay at one of the Presidential Suites at The Ritz-Carlton, Dubai. It's where luxury and wellness will be at your beck and call.

For reservations, call +971 4 399 4000 or visit www.ritzcarlton.com/en/Properties/Dubai/Default.html



The spread at Wafi Gourmet

Dish to try: Home-smoked honey salmon with scallop chutney and lemon upma (www.indegobyvineet.com; meal for two from AED650 or ₹11,300)

WAFI GOURMET

Lebanese

The city's best Arabian deli counter overflows with cheeses, olives, peppers, pickles, truffles, hummus and tabbouleh, and sweets such as baklava.

Dish to try: Batata hara (www.wafigourmet.com; meal for two from AED150 or ₹2,600)

MANNALAND KOREAN RESTAURANT

Korean

This little gem offers delicious, wholesome food, and many of its patrons are Korean, so you know that the food is as authentic as it should be.

Dish to try: Marinated short rib barbeque (+971 4394 1300; meal for two from AED200 or ₹3,500)

PARS IRANIAN KITCHEN

Persian

At the Satwa branch of this restaurant, skewers of delicious meat are cooked right in front of you. The portions are large and the atmosphere relaxing. It's a great place to enjoy local culture away from the gloss of the ski slopes and the dancing fountains.

Dish to try: The mixed-grill platter (+971 4398 4000; meal for two from AED200 or ₹3,500)

LA PETITE MAISON

Niçoise/Mediterranean

This is the real home of fine Niçoise cooking in Dubai, by way of Rue Saint-François de Paule in Nice. The dishes are meant for sharing, making it a great place for a quick and enjoyable lunch with friends. The adventurous can choose from a variety of meats, including venison.

Dish to try: Burrata with tomatoes and basil (www.lpmduhai.ae; meal for two from AED600 or ₹10,400)

AL SAFADI

Lebanese

The Al Rigga Road outlet of this restaurant is quite large, and has a terrace and a shisha bar. Stop by for reasonably priced, healthy fare in clean surroundings. If you're a falafel fan, then Al Safadi is definitely worth a visit.

Dish to try: Hummus with freshly baked pita (www.alsafadi.ae; meal for two from AED150 or ₹2,600)

THE RIVINGTON GRILL

British

The Rivington Grill at Souk Al Bahar is a favourite with British expats, who gorge on its fish cakes, burgers and sticky-toffee puddings. The outside terrace, with its stunning views of the Burj Lake, Burj Khalifa and The Dubai Fountain, enhances any meal here.

Dish to try: Traditional Fish 'n' Chips (www.rivingtondubai.ae; meal for two from AED450 or ₹7,800)

AL REEF LEBANESE BAKERY

Lebanese

This tiny, 24-hour eatery on Al Wasl Road is famous for its manakeesh, a folded Arabic flat bread with different toppings (cheese being a favourite). Apart from the hordes of locals who throng the eatery in the mornings, Dubai's partygoers can also be seen here at 3am. The sweets' section is not to be missed, especially because of the baklava.

Dish to try: Manakeesh (+971 4394 5200; meal for two AED70 or ₹1,220)

LA SERRE BISTRO & BOULANGERIE

Organic French/Mediterranean

This Dubai hotspot opened last August at the Vida Downtown hotel. With a boulangerie downstairs and a more formal bistro upstairs, chef Izu Ani (formerly of La Petite Maison) has brought his signature Niçoise food to yet another stylish Dubai eatery. Ani sources only organic ingredients from farmers and artisan suppliers throughout Europe. His boulangerie, open for breakfast and lunch, has some of the best freshly baked bread in the city.

Dish to try: Scottish salmon, fresh herbs and confit lemon (www.laserre.ae; meal for two from AED400 or ₹6,900)

MAISON BAGATELLE

French

Located in Downtown Dubai, this offshoot of New York's Bistro Bagatelle doesn't aim to recreate the raucous, boozy brunches across the Atlantic. Instead, it's a more low-key, Parisian-style crêperie and café, with ex-La Petite Maison chef Tim Newton at the helm. The restaurant deserves honours for its flavourful and inventive breakfast dishes, especially its French toast, which is made out of brioche.

Dish to try: Truffled Mac and Cheese (+971 4420 3442; meal for two from AED250 or ₹4,350)

CUCINA MIA

Italian

Swarming with Italian chefs from nearby restaurants in the Dubai Marina area, this is clearly the place to go if you're looking for authenticity. It's a cosy eatery that uses superior Italian ingredients to make some of the best pizza 'a metro' (by the metre)—the typical Neapolitan way to enjoy different toppings, all on one giant, metre-long pizza. The fish dishes are nearly always made with the fresh catch of the morning.

Dish to try: Carpaccio di Salmone (www.cucinamia.ae; meal for two from AED150 or ₹2,600)



Dubai's Secret Address

Move the skyscrapers aside, there's a palace in town that'll have you living like royalty—at the one and only Palace Downtown Dubai

Travel is driven by the idea of experiencing something beyond our ordinary lives. Like being transported to a scene from the Arabian Nights. Where the views are like masterpieces. Where everything is personalised down to the very last detail—whether it's the delicious gift-wrapped dates in your room, a special afternoon over exquisite tea or an evening of exotic shisha served in traditional tents.

Managed by The Address Hotels + Resorts, The Palace

is one of Dubai's best kept secrets. Located on the spectacular lake overlooking one of the world's tallest towers—the Burj Khalifa—it is in the heart of downtown, yet forms its own little oasis. Connected with the Souk Al Bahar, a modern shopping destination with Arabesque architectural features, it's just a stone's throw from The Dubai Mall and other famous tourist attractions. The resort exudes an enchanting Middle Eastern theme and has soul and style in its every nook and corner. What's more,

each of the 242 rooms and suites feature balconies which offer uninterrupted views of either the Burj Khalifa, The Dubai Fountain or the enchanting Old Town, and are fully equipped with the latest amenities.

Dine like kings and queens at the hotel's award winning restaurants. From Thai cuisine—with a special emphasis on Bangkok-style seafood—at Thiptara, to savouring traditional Argentinean cuisine, over live music, at Asado, then there's Ewaan, the restaurant which offers a blend of Arabic and Oriental

cuisines or its lounge where you can explore the diverse array of Shisha options. Don't miss Fai, a chic and vibrant cocktail bar where you can soak in the best views of the tapering tower and beautiful fountain and Al Bayt where you can treat your taste buds to the most delectable array of teas.

Be pampered unconditionally at the hotel's main jewel—it's sprawling spa—with dedicated floors for men and women. Select from a menu of Oriental treatments as you appreciate the Arabic décor around

you. And the hammam bath is an absolute must-do to complete your authentic Middle Eastern experience.

There's no such thing as too decadent—every moment at The Palace Downtown Dubai is curated to be extraordinary.

The Palace Downtown Dubai: Mohammed Bin Rashid Boulevard, Downtown Dubai PO Box 9770.

**Tel: +971 4 428 7888,
Web: www.theaddress.com
Facebook: /ThePalace
DowntownDubai;
Twitter and Instagram:
@PalaceDowntown
#DiscoverPalace**



A dish at Coya. Left: seating at the restaurant

COYA

Latin American

Born in London, Coya's Dubai outpost at the Four Seasons hotel is a hotspot: the drinks are fantastic, the food is excellent; even the thoughtful lighting makes it the best place to be seen. The dishes include a range of classic ceviche, a variety of ethnic hot pot, tiraditos (sliced raw fish), and anticuchos (grilled skewers of fish, meat and vegetables).

Dish to try: Tempura de Chile Amarillo Peruano

(www.coyarestaurant.com; meal for two from AED1,000 or ₹17,500)

JUNOON

Indian

Junoon, the Michelin-starred Indian restaurant by chef Vikas Khanna is the place for you if you're a fan of goat meat and seafood. The menu features five Indian cooking elements: tandoor, tawa, digri, handi and pathar. Khanna has also created several locally inspired dishes (mutton rose biryani, date cakes) using ingredients sourced from the Middle East itself.

Dish to try: Chocolate date with milk chocolate parfait, date cake, hibiscus purée, chilli glass and Scotch braised dates (www.shangri-la.com; meal for two from AED650 or ₹11,300)

SOCIAL BY HEINZ BECK

Mediterranean

If you're looking for the culinary delights associated with Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck's La Pergola in Rome, then head to Social, at the Waldorf Astoria Dubai Palm Jumeirah. It serves a similar mix of creative European cuisine but in a less formal setting. The German-born chef serves light dishes of seafood such as grilled tuna with Mediterranean perfumes, along with others like beef tenderloin with an apple onion jus.

Dish to try: Grana Padano risotto with duck confit

(waldorfastoria3.hilton.com; meal for two from AED900 or ₹15,600)

NUSRET

Turkish

While it's still difficult to score a table at Four Seasons Resort Dubai at Jumeirah Beach's Nusret, it'll be worth the effort: the beautiful cuts of meat are expertly grilled with sea salt and ground pepper; the beef carpaccio is served in delicate rolls with Parmesan crisps, olive oil and rocket. Even the vegetarian quinoa salad is superb.

Dish to try: Nusret special (and the baklava!) (www.fourseasons.com; meal for two from AED1,800 or ₹31,200)

QBARA

Contemporary Middle Eastern

What Manish Mehrotra and Gaggan Anand are doing for Indian food is what chef Colin Clague is attempting at Qbara. The menu is a thoroughly modern take on Middle Eastern cuisine, boasting dishes like crispy raw vegetables, truffle-scented labneh, lobster kibbeh with fresh herbs, avocado labneh. For mains, choose from seven-spiced crispy salmon with Moroccan tomato jam and mastic oil, or the slow cooked lamb shank with garlic, sumac and chickpea purée.

Dish to try: The Qbara Experience set menu

(www.qbara.ae; meal for two from AED800 or ₹13,850)

BUSABA EATHAI

Thai

Busaba Eathai is one of London's best-known Thai restaurants, created back in 1991 by Alan Yau of Yauatcha, Hakkasan and Wagamama fame. Brand new in Dubai, it offers a range of easy Thai food in a casual environment.

Dish to try: Prawn crackers with sweet chilli sauce (www.busaba.com; meal for two from AED173 or ₹3,000) 📍



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JUST FOR KIDS

The diverse city-state has an array of fun activities to keep children of all ages occupied, says **Rhonda Carrier**

There is no denying that Dubai is one of the world's most modern and rapidly-changing cities, offering unbeatable and unique experiences for everyone from shopaholics and foodies to party-goers. This seemingly adults-only paradise is the ideal family getaway destination too. From safe beaches, thrilling water-parks and desert camel rides to all-year-round skiing and mall and souk shopping, there are plenty of activities to keep kids entertained. Here is our

ultimate guide to Dubai's most unmissable family experiences.

TAKE A DESERT SAFARI

Organised tours differ from firm to firm (try www.arabian-adventures.com), but most offer dune drives, quad biking, camel treks, sand-surfing, alfresco Arabian barbecues and sleepovers in a Bedouin tent. Some tour companies also arrange hot-air balloon rides over the desert. Alternatively, venture out to the **Hajar Mountains** to the famous Hatta

Rock Pools, which occupy a spring-water gorge. Stop off at the restored 16th-century **Hatta Heritage Village**, with its fort, museum and watchtowers.

WATCH A CAMEL RACE

This ancient sport has had a revival in recent years, with the best venue being the free-to-enter **Al Marmoom** camel racetrack. Races, now ridden by robots rather than children and reaching speeds of up to 40kmph, are hosted here. Check the website of Dubai Camel Racing Club

(www.dcrc.ae) for race days.

RIDE AN ABRA

Traverse the historic creek waterway in a traditional wooden boat and take in the contrast between Dubai's traditional wind-towers and its shiny new architecture. Then while away the afternoon at the waterfront **Creek Park**. **Children's City** (www.childrencity.dm.gov.ae), UAE's first interactive educational space. There are playgrounds, a mini-golf course and cable-car rides in the vicinity. →



Quad biking on sand dunes



The Aquaventure Waterpark at Atlantis The Palm clockwise from right: kids playing football on Jumeirah Beach; Ski Dubai in the Mall of the Emirates

TAKE THE KIDS SHOPPING

At any time of the year, a visit to Dubai's atmospheric souks and legendary malls is a must. Among its thousand plus shops and services at **The Dubai Mall** (www.thedubaimall.com), there are the world's biggest indoor gold souk, a vast aquarium, an Olympic-size ice rink, the SEGA Republic high-adrenaline theme park, the KidZania edutainment centre and a 22-screen cineplex as well as the Emirates A380 Experience flight simulator.

Mall of the Emirates (www.malloftheemirates.com), the **City Centre Deira** (www.citycentredeira.com) and the Egyptian-themed **Wafi Mall** (www.wafi.com) all have good kids' entertainment centres too. Or plan your trip around the Dubai Shopping Festival (early 2016) that includes children's events, street entertainment, and fireworks.



COOL OFF AT SKI DUBAI

The city's year-round indoor ski resort, **Ski Dubai**, located in the Mall of the Emirates is another must-visit. On offer are five ski runs, tobogganing hills, bobsledding, and a snow park that has a cavern filled with interactive experiences. The resident penguins bring an extra-surreal touch to this venue, with its chairlifts and cafés. (www.theplaymania.com)



CHEER ON THE RIDERS

The new **Meydan Grandstand and Racecourse** (www.meydan.ae) hosts Dubai World Cup, the world's richest horse race. And—this being Dubai—Meydan also has a luxury trackside hotel, a museum, a gallery, an IMAX cinema and a marina. You can also watch polo at the **Dubai Polo & Equestrian Club** (poloclubdubai.com).

EXPLORE DUBAILAND

This vast entertainment complex boasts the **Dubai Autodrome** with karting and laser-tagging, **Sports City** with classes in various activities like horse-riding at the **Al Sahra Equestrian Centre**, and the annual **Global Village** (Nov–April), which includes fair rides and games. The LEGOLAND Dubai theme park and IMG Worlds of Adventure are much-anticipated additions, scheduled to open next year. The latter will be a huge indoor park bringing together Cartoon Network and MARVEL rides and attractions. (www.dubailand.ae)

HIT THE BEACH


Enjoy windsurfing, water-skiing and other fun aquatic activities with **Water Sports Dubai** (www.watersportsdubai.com), which operates on the Arabian Gulf's **Jumeirah Beach**. You can also spend the day on one of the five beaches at **Al Mamzar Beach Park**, which have chalets to rent,

a swimming pool, playgrounds (one with a wooden castle), a scenic train, barbecue sites and picnic areas.

GO SCUBA DIVING

Dubai is known for its wreck-diving, and many hotels in the city have a diving club. Children aged 10 or more are allowed to scuba-dive, but pool-based **PADI Bubblemaker** (www.padi.com) training is available for kids aged eight and above—most notably at **The Pavilion Dive Centre** located at the Jumeirah Beach Hotel (www.jumeirah.com). Opt for a meal at Al Mahara at the Burj Al Arab Jumeirah (www.jumeirah.com), a seafood restaurant centred around a giant fish tank which you enter via a surreal simulated submarine ride. During lunch, children under three eat free, and kids aged four to 11 can choose from a kids' menu or get 50 percent off on à la carte and set menus.

GET WET, YET AGAIN

The **Wild Wadi Waterpark** (www.jumeirah.com) has a fantastic range of 30 rides, many of which are interconnected. From two artificial surfing machines and the newly-added Tantrum Alley to Juha's Dhow and Lagoon, a play structure for younger kids with more than 100 games and rides, there is something here to keep the whole brood entertained. An alternative is **Aquaventure Waterpark** at Atlantis The Palm hotel (www.atlantisthepalm.com), which in addition to slides, rides and a beach offers various encounters with dolphins at its **Dolphin Bay**. A relative newcomer to the scene, **Arabian Water Parks** is a floating inflatable bouncy playground a few metres off the coast of The Beach at Jumeirah Beach Residence, made up of trampolines, slides, climbing walls, other obstacles and islands (www.arabianwaterparks.com). 

FLY IN STYLE

Dubai is now truly at the centre of the world

In January 2015, Dubai International overtook London's Heathrow to become the world's busiest airport, with an annual traffic of almost 70 million passengers. Not content to rest on their laurels, Dubai International is already working on Concourse D, which will boost the airport capacity to 90 million. Much of this traffic between East and West is courtesy Emirates (www.emirates.com), of course, which continuously adds new routes; it now flies to more than 140 destinations across the globe. (Service to Orlando, Florida starts in September; Bologna, Italy begins November). But our top three reasons to love Emirates: free wi-fi on most A380 flights; complimentary airport transfers for Business and First Class passengers; and those amazing lounges in Dubai, where you can drink, eat, shower and even get your hair blown out. What's not to love?



ROSEMIN MANJI

The glam entrepreneur on where to party

Music Hall

Live performances, great DJs, high energy and a guaranteed fun night out. (www.jumeirah.com)

Sass Cafe

A small venue, stylish crowd, dinner club, live singers, then a French DJ; get ready to dance on the tables. (www.sasscafe-dubai.ae)

Mercury Lounge

For something more chilled, and great service, this rooftop bar at the Four Seasons Resort Dubai at Jumeirah Beach is ideal. (www.fourseasons.com)

101

Perfect for relaxing over cocktails while watching the sun go down. (www.thepalm.oneandonlyresorts.com)



The Jetty

This beach bar has indoor and outdoor seating and is as close to Ibiza as you'll get in Dubai. (www.royalmirage.oneandonlyresorts.com)

Bag this!

Iran-born, Dubai-based Lilian Afshar created colourful acrylic clutches while in design school. Before she knew it, they were a global rage. New for Fall is the marble effect. We're crushing. And clutching. (*S*uce, Dubai Mall; www.shopatsauce.com*)



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DREAM DISCOVER EXPLORE THRILL

A woman with red hair, wearing a long black gown with a large bow at the back, stands in a room with ornate gold-colored walls and a large, patterned archway. She is looking back over her shoulder.

WITH
LOVE
FROM

D U B A I

Shiny malls are all
very well, but
what about when
you want to shop
like a local?

Priyanka

Pradhan reveals
some of the best
regional brands

PHOTOGRAPH: BAMBAAH



When endless excursions to a daunting network of malls unearth the same souvenirs, done-to-death brands and boring keepsakes, it may be time to dig deeper. On your next trip to Dubai, take your pick from the UAE's homegrown brands and products; they are inspired by local culture yet have a markedly global appeal. More than 200 nationalities make up the multicultural milieu of the UAE, so expect a heady cocktail of influences on brands that are 'Made in the UAE'. From Azerbaijan to Africa and from travel to confectionery, the UAE is inspired by the entire world, and these 'glocal' wares make for memorable and meaningful takeaways, both for yourself and as gifts.

MICAROON MAKEUP

Inspired by the vivid colours of her favourite French confectionery, Lebanese-born founder Rima Khoreibi set up this cosmetics brand that is very colourful, both in terms of product and packaging. Micaroon Makeup's range of products, including lipsticks, blushes, accessories and body butter, are named after local icons like the Burj Khalifa and Arabic words like Ashq (which means "true love"). (www.micaroon.com)

BAMBAH

Dubai's first and only high-end vintage boutique offers one-off pieces that are



sourced from across the world. The boutique stocks period clothing and trinkets and owner Maha Al Rasheed's own ready-to-wear collection, which is a throwback to 1950s glamour. (www.bambah.com)

NADINE KANSO

Both as a photographer and a jewellery designer, Nadine Kanso explores ideas of Arab identity and culture. Her jewellery collection, 'Bil Arabi' (which means "in Arabic") takes its inspiration from the Arabic alphabet, with words and phrases incorporated into 18ct gold embellished with precious and semi-precious stones. Her second collection, Nadine K, complements 'Bil Arabi' and offers limited-edition home accents, clothing and art. (www.nadinekanso.com)

HOUSE OF NOMAD

The name of this contemporary fashion label is a nod to the original inhabitants of Dubai, who travelled from one temporary desert dwelling to another. Co-founders Ahmed El-Sayed and Saleh Al-Banna

From left: jewellery designer Nadine Kanso; inside POSE/ARAZZI, fusion wear store; clothing from House of Nomad. **Opposite page:** from Bambah's Fall/Winter '15 collection



typically use a single colour for each collection, creating sleek, wearable pieces for men and women, including sweaters, skirts and jackets. But the main focus is on luxe sportswear. (sales.houseofnomad@gmail.com)

SARAY COUTURE

The Dubai-based independent label's handmade turbans and accessories are influenced by the Arab world's heritage as well as Western vintage style. The Azerbaijani founders of Saray draw inspiration from iconic women who style their ensembles with regal turbans—HH Sheikhha Moza bint Nasser of Qatar, the late Dame Elizabeth Taylor and Barbra Streisand have all been fans of headwear. (www.saraycouture.com) →





POSE/ARAZZI

In their fusion-wear collection, Emirati sisters Hanan and Hessa Ozair combine local sensibilities and Western design. Think abaya-style trench coats and rib-cage shrugs. The sisters draw inspiration from art, architecture and sub-cultures in the Arab world to produce only five limited-edition pieces of each design. (www.posearazzi.com)

RAK PEARLS

The UAE has been producing fine pearls for over 7,000 years, from the time when free divers would jump off specially made boats with nothing but turtle-shell noseclips to find pearl oysters. Natural pearls were among the country's biggest exports until the discovery of oil in the 1940s. Now, the industry is seeing a revival, thanks to the efforts of RAK Pearls Holding, which harvests around 40,000 pearls annually, offering treasures from the Arabian Gulf that are truly unique to the UAE. Choose from natural Blue Baroque Keshi pearls, rare black pearls or iridescent cultivated varieties seen at

Clockwise from top left: attar is a must-buy in Dubai; chocolate from Al Nassma; a bag from Al Khaznah; the UAE has been producing quality pearls for millennia



jewellery brands such as Mouawad. (www.mouawad.com)

NE'EMAH FRAGRANCE

Kuwaiti perfumer, Mohammed Ne'emah's inspiration comes from his travels abroad, but his sensibilities are deeply rooted in the Arab world—a characteristic that comes across in all his fragrances. Some of his bestselling fragrances include Laya' meaning 'Lady', which is inspired by the Orient, and Chateau Rouge, which is inspired by stories of a free-spirited Arabian princess. Popular amongst Middle East cognoscenti, Ne'emah's fragrances for men and women are also custom-made for those who like to personalise their scent or its packaging. (www.neemah.com)

MASTIHASHOP

Mastiha is a rare tree resin that is native to the Mediterranean region, and grows on the Greek island of Chios. It was documented as one of the first natural cooking spices and is

a key ingredient in everything from coffee to medicines. At the shop, you can happily while away a few hours choosing from varieties of mastiha-flavoured candies, ice creams, shakes, cosmetics, massage and bath oils and gift items. (Aswaaq Building, Jumeirah 1, Al Wasl Road)

AL KHAZNAH

Camel leather has long been known for its character and texture. But Al Khaznah, a tannery based in Abu Dhabi, aims to take it a few notches up by establishing it globally on par with luxury calf leather. The tannery designs its own handbags, wallets, briefcases, travel bags and accessories in different types of camel leather, including an easily biodegradable variety. (www.alkhaznahattannery.com)

AL NASSMA CAMEL MILK CHOCOLATES

This premium chocolate brand offers the first and finest camel milk chocolate made in Dubai. Al Nassma describes its chocolates as not overly sweet, with a hint of caramel and honey, along with a mineral touch, which is characteristic of camel milk. The milk is sourced from a local farm where, according to the chocolatier, the camels are treated ethically and even given regular pedicures! (www.al-nassma.com)

DUBAI PERFUME SOUK, DEIRA

No shopping list from Dubai is complete without traditional Arabic attar, perfume oils from quaint little shops along the bylanes of old Dubai. Beautiful vintage-style cut-glass containers in different shapes store concoctions of flower-based attar and the legendary oud—a perfumed oil derived from one of the world's most expensive varieties of wood. What's more, many of these perfumers offer to mix and match scents according to the preferences of customers, so you can get yourself a lovely bespoke fragrance. A must-have for your perfume collection back home, for its unique fragrance and for, well, an essence of the UAE. (Sikkat al Khail Road, Souk Deira) 📍





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25

THINGS
TO DO IN
DUBAI

WITHOUT
STEPPING
INTO A
MALL

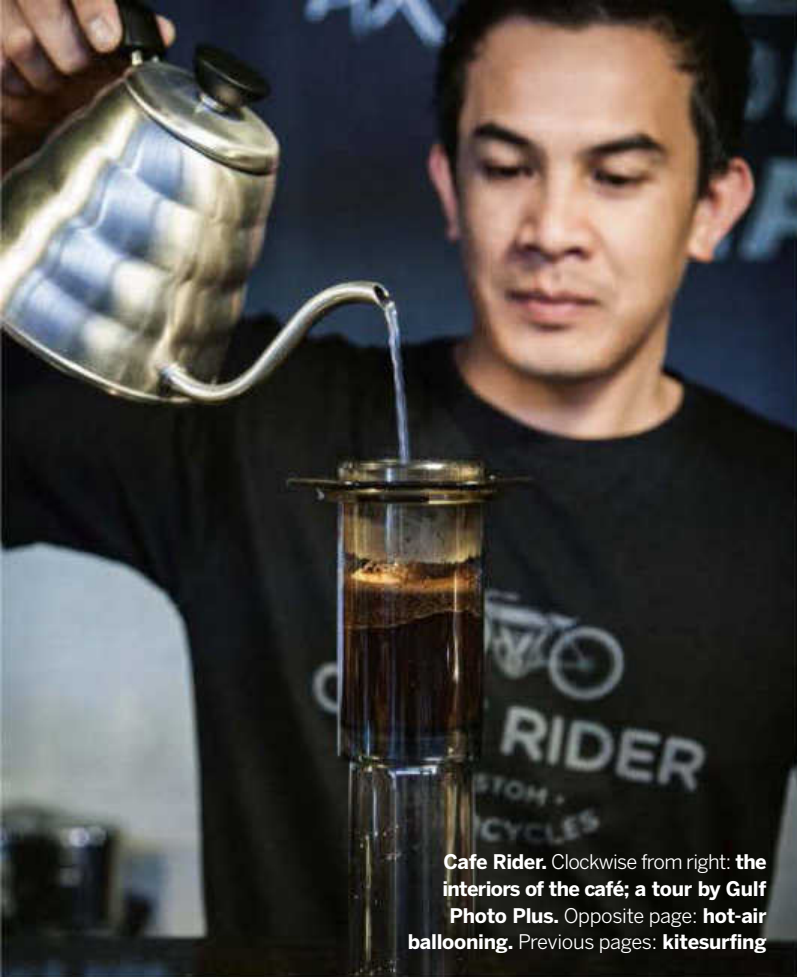
Delna Prakashan finds
that the emirate has far
more to offer than shiny,
glitzy skyscrapers.
Photographs by
Christopher List

Food in the backstreets of Old Dubai, walking tours around Deira, live music, bubble soccer—Dubai is a smorgasbord of activity and culture that will keep you (and the little ones) entertained

1 **BALLOON ADVENTURES EMIRATES**

Soar high into the sky in a hot-air balloon and watch a breathtaking sunrise against the backdrop of the majestic Al Hajar mountains. Then turn your gaze below to the desert landscape, the oases, camels, oryxes and gazelles. Finish the hour-long ride with cold refreshments and the warm hospitality of the desert people on landing. (www.ballooning.ae; from AED995 or \$16,950)





Cafe Rider. Clockwise from right: **the interiors of the café; a tour by Gulf Photo Plus.** Opposite page: **hot-air ballooning.** Previous pages: **kitesurfing**



2 CAFE RIDER

Caffeine meets creativity at this concept café that doubles up as a bike showroom. Located in Al Quoz, it is also a popular space for events such as art exhibitions. Cafe Rider also organises Caffeine Cruises, which combine the thrill of riding with the high of caffeine. (www.cafe-rider.com)

3 KITESURF CLUB DUBAI

Make use of the UAE's steady winds and warm waters and spend a day kitesurfing. The one- to three-hour courses take place on Kite Beach. Spot Dubai's famous SALT food truck at the beach and satisfy the appetite you work up with some tasty burgers. (www.kitesurf.ae; from AED350 or ₹5,900)



4 ALSERKAL AVENUE

This art and culture hub has over 20 modern art galleries and creative agencies. Explore works from Iran and North Africa at Gallery Isabelle Van Den Eynde, or Middle Eastern furniture designs at La Galerie Nationale. Stop at A4 Space, an events and co-working venue, for coffee. (www.alserkalavenue.ae)

5 GULF PHOTO PLUS

Explore and capture the city's culture through a camera. Whether you're a photography newbie, enthusiast or professional, a Gulf Photo Plus tour offers you the opportunity to meet talented city-based photographers who actively engage with audiences through workshops, street photography tours and exhibitions. The #unseenDXB Photo Trail, for example, takes you on a nighttime trip around Naif, in Old Dubai, and gives you the chance to enjoy the local souk in all its frenetic, colourful glory. Plus, you get to shoot your own keepsakes.

(www.gulfphotoplus.com; from AED584 or ₹9,950 per person)





6 SHEIKH MOHAMMED BIN RASHID CENTRE FOR CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING (SMCCU)

Be it a guided walk through the alleys of Al Fahidi Historic District—one of the oldest Emirati neighbourhoods of Dubai, eating a traditional Emirati breakfast (pictured) or visiting the iconic Jumeirah Mosque, the SMCCU, a non-profit organisation, aims to familiarise visitors with the nuances of Arab culture, and the traditions and religious practices of the UAE through activities conducted by local volunteers.
(www.cultures.ae; from AED80 or ₹1,360 per person)

7 THEJAMJAR

Say hello to the artsy side of Dubai. A public DIY painting studio and learning space with a year-round calendar packed with events and exhibitions showcasing visual arts, music, theatre and film—thejamjar is playing a pivotal role in developing Dubai's art scene. An absolute must for art lovers, thejamjar is also a community space that creative professionals can come and work out of. (www.thejamjardubai.com)

8 COOKING@HOME

Cristina Bartoli and Francesca Busso, the Italian home chefs who run Cooking@Home, met at an English language class in Dubai, only to learn of their mutual love for food. Now they share that love with visitors. Attend one of their cooking classes and learn how to make authentic ravioli, biscotti, eggplant parmigiana and much more. (www.cookingathomeindubai.com; AED180 or ₹3,070)

9 RESTRONAUT

Try out a new way to be social through tailor-made dining experiences based on different themes, such as fashion, entrepreneurship and design. You register online, pick a theme-based table of interest, drool over the menu and look forward to meeting new people. You are guaranteed to have a fun, stimulating conversation and, of course, great food along the way. (www.restronaut.me; prices vary based on theme and restaurant)



Bubble Soccer

10 BUBBLE SOCCER

Run, bounce, roll and repeat! Play soccer on a FIFA-approved pitch with just one aim in mind—to run fearlessly into other players wearing an inflatable bubble. Bubble Soccer is great fun, especially for families with young children. Book ahead of your trip, so that you're assured of getting a pitch for your team to play on.

(www.bubblesoccer.ae; AED120 or ₹2,050 per person; minimum six people)

11 BOUNCE INC

The energy at the emirate's first and largest indoor trampoline playground is so infectious that you will literally be bouncing off the walls. BOUNCE's coaches can teach you how to do backflips and parkour-style lunges. With more than 80 interconnected trampolines, this is a great place to bring the kids. Plus the high-energy moves offer a good workout.

(www.bounce.ae; AED80 or ₹1,360 per person)

12 THE ARCHIVE

This contemporary library, in the heart of Safa Park, brings together the arts, design and literature, providing a platform for people to explore these fields. Programming includes indoor and outdoor classes for yoga and dance, musical performances, book launches, book clubs, talks by artists, film screenings in the park and workshops for children.

(www.thearchive.ae; prices vary based on activity)



13 **HOOFBEATZ**

Get acquainted with a symbol of Arab history and culture, the Arabian horse, through a range of equestrian-themed activities organised by HoofbeatZ. From stable tours to innovative workshops like 'Life lessons through horses' for young children, the organisation offers you the chance to experience a refreshing and alternative approach to the region's rich heritage through its iconic animal. (www.hoofbeatz.com; prices vary based on activity)



14 **CYCLING HOLIDAYS ME**

Sightsee, shop, dine and get fit with this all-in-one experience packed into a bicycle tour around Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Open to people at any fitness level, Cycling Holidays ME's seven-day holiday itinerary combines indulgence and quality training. If the people you're travelling with aren't keen on cycling, the company can organise shopping, sightseeing and other activities for them.

(www.cyclingholidaysme.com; from AED8,190 or ₹1,38,000 per person)

15 **DUBAI AUTODROME**

Get your adrenaline fix at one of the world's most modern racing circuits. The popular Kartdrome at the Dubai Autodrome offers Arrive & Drive sessions (for ages seven and up), on both the indoor and outdoor tracks, with state-of-the-art leisure karts. Let go and step on it as the facility has extremely stringent safety and security measures in place to give you the ride of a lifetime.

(www.dubaiautodrome.com; from AED100 or ₹1,700)

16 **SKYDIVE DUBAI**

Abandon your fears as you take in breathtaking views of Palm Dubai from high up in the air. Splurge a little extra on a tandem jump experience (with a professional instructor) that offers the thrill of a free fall and an unforgettable view. The expressions and moments from the jump, caught on camera, are priceless. No previous experience is required—just an empty stomach and the ability to let go.

(www.skydivedubai.com; AED1,999 or ₹34,100 per person)



17 FRESHLY GROUND SOUNDS

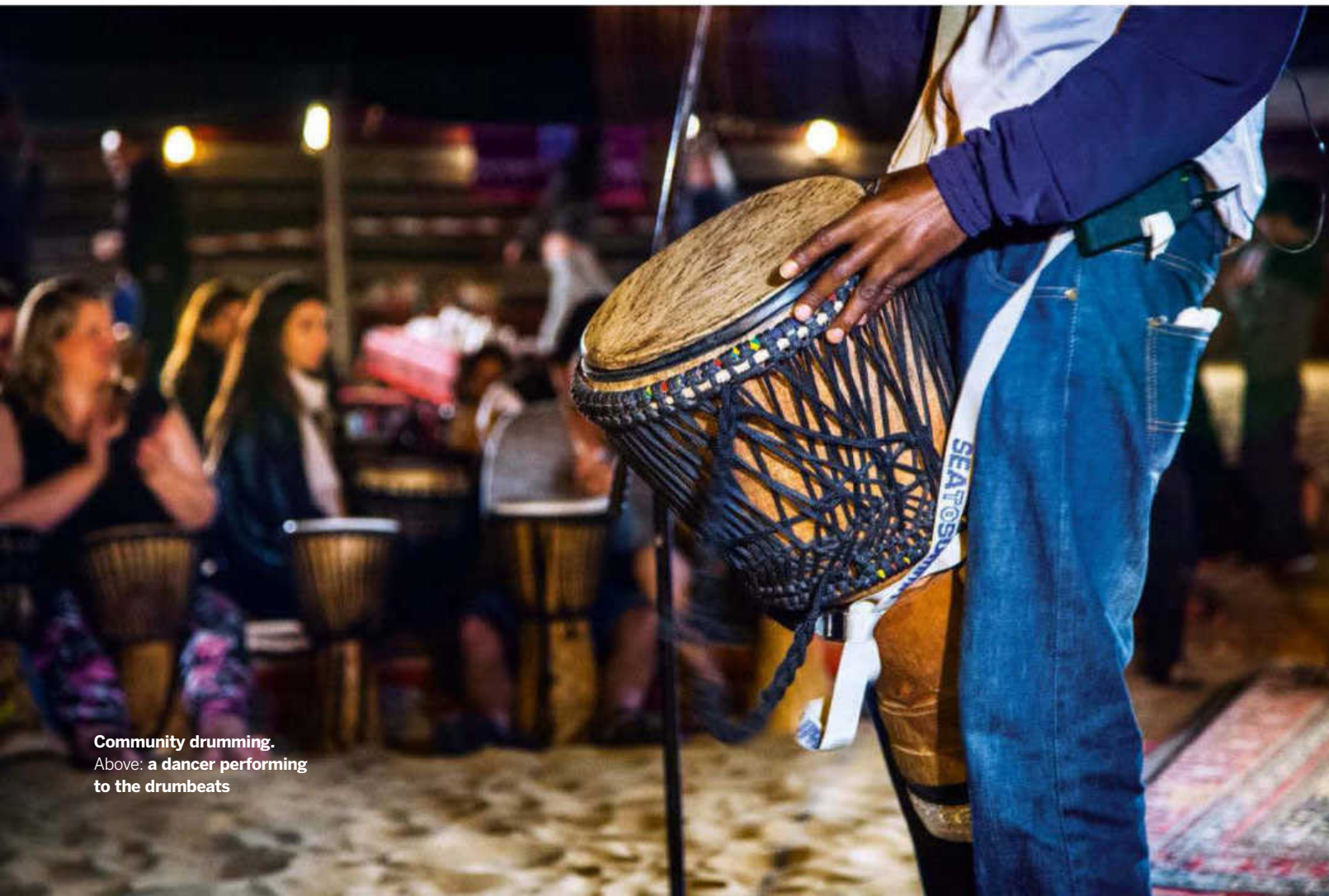
Sit back, relax and enjoy live music at a community space. You'll see music lovers sway to the rhythms of local amateur artists to whom Freshly provides a platform. Expect to hear raw acoustic, casual and lo-fi music, powered by pure talent. Look up the event calendar and don't miss out on uber-cool and fun jamming sessions. (www.freshlygroundsounds.com)

18 COURTYARD PLAYHOUSE

Meet Dubai's first and only dedicated theatre custom-designed for improvisation. Enrol in the Desert Monologues Acting or Improv workshops, which take place through the year. Look out for the theatre's calendar of events—a videotaped version of *Of Mice and Men*, starring James Franco, showed here in March, and Tom Stoppard's *The Hard Problem* in June. Even if you Miss the shows, you're guaranteed a hearty laugh playing games at one of the theatre's drop-in jams. (www.courtyardplayhouse.com)

19 DUBAI DRUMS

Capture the city's beat through community drumming. Promoted as a team-building activity, it's great for corporate retreats. But it's also just a fun way to meet new people, especially if you're a solo traveller. Sign up for the Full Moon Desert Drumming experience: starlit skies, synchronous rhythms, good vibes—what more could one ask for? (www.dubaidrums.com; AED250 or ₹4,260 per person)



Community drumming.
Above: a dancer performing
to the drumbeats

20 **FIELDS OF YOGA**

Find your inner balance practising yoga on the beach, watching the sun rise over the horizon of the Persian Gulf. Fields of Yoga's Sunrise Beach Community Yoga class on the Jumeirah Open beach, draws a variety of people. Spend a day tanning at the beach afterwards or walk into one of Jumeirah's quaint cafés for a hearty breakfast.

(www.fieldsofyoga.com; AED60 or ₹1,000 per class)



21 **THE FARMERS' MARKET ON THE TERRACE**

This community-led initiative is active during the winter harvest season. Attend cooking demonstrations and tasting sessions, enjoy tête-à-têtes with farmers or a lazy breakfast on the lawn with fresh food from the market.

(www.facebook.com/TheFarmersMarketOnTheTerrace)

22 **DUBAI SPICE SOUK**

Narrow alleyways, fragrant air and historic architecture—the old spice souk encompasses stories of the city's past, which unfold as you visit the little shops selling frankincense, herbs and artefacts. The Spice Souk is located in Eastern Dubai, Deira, and is adjacent to the Dubai Gold Souk, which is also worth a visit.

23 **THE RIPE FOOD & CRAFT MARKET**

This weekly event at the local park unites vendors and visitors who share the love for fresh, seasonal, organic, local and handmade produce. From mini pancakes with Nutella to artisanal items, there's something for everyone here. (www.ripeme.com)



The Farmers' Market. Right: a selection of breads at the market



24 **FINE DINING WITH FOODIVA**

Experience intimate fine dining with Samantha Wood, better known as Foodiva, Dubai's popular food blogger. With her 'Fun is the new fine dining' tour, guests can taste select dishes, paired with wine, at five high-end restaurants.

(www.limeandtonic.com; AED 1,050 or ₹17,970)

25 **FRYING PAN ADVENTURES**

Eat your way through Old Dubai, on tours guided by locals. On the Middle Eastern Food Pilgrimage, for example, you'll taste flavours from Jordan, Palestine, the Emirates, Syria, Iran and Egypt. The company also arranges bespoke tours.

(www.fryingpanadventures.com; from AED300 or ₹5,100 per person)

DUBAI'S ANNUAL

The shows and festivals worth travelling for.

LIFESTYLE

DUBAI INTERNATIONAL DANCE FESTIVAL

Open to professionals, amateurs and enthusiasts alike, the festival now is about learning and meeting people from around the world. A tribute to the UAE dance community is 2015's theme.

CNT Tip: Don't miss out on the beginner-friendly workshops offered by world-class instructors.

When: 14–21 September 2015
(www.dubaidancefestival.com)

SENSATION DUBAI

Get groovy at Sensation Dubai 2015, one of the world's leading dance events. Prepare to move to the beats of top DJs. This year's theme is Ocean of White.

CNT Tip: Spend the night at the stylish Meydan Hotel close to the venue.

When: 30 October 2015
(www.sensation.com)



DUBAI WORLD SUPER SERIES FINALS

The world's leading players will compete at this badminton championship finals at the Hamdan Sports Complex in Dubai.

CNT Tip: Use the hourly free

shuttle bus service from select metro stations to the Sports Complex.

When: 9–13 December 2015
(www.dubaisuperseriesfinals.ae)



DUBAI INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Screened at some of the best cinemas across the city, Dubai's most loved film festival draws global celebrities, avant-garde films, and eager audiences.

CNT Tip: Watch a movie under the stars at the open-air cinema located at The Beach Dubai.

When: 9–16 December 2015
(www.dubaifilmfest.com)

DUBAI JAZZ FESTIVAL

Music aficionados can watch artists like James Blunt, Sting and John Legend at the three-day festival that brings together the biggest names in jazz, pop, blues and rock.

CNT Tip: Buy tickets way in advance, as the shows are always a sell out.

When: 24–26 February 2016
(www.dubaijazzfest.com)

DUBAI WORLD CUP CARNIVAL

The Carnival kicks off with a series of horse races in January 2016 and leads to the 21st edition of the Dubai World Cup. With millions as prize money, experience the world's richest race day at the Meydan Grandstand and Racecourse.

CNT Tip: Enjoy the special package at Meydan Grandstand's signature Winner's Circle restaurant; all its seats offer stellar views of the racecourse.

When: March 2016
(www.dubairacingclub.com)

DUBAI INTERNATIONAL BOAT SHOW

Sailing and marine enthusiasts can witness an exhibit of elite



yachts, exotic supercars and interactive activities from over 850 exhibitors from across the world. No

wonder it is marked as the Middle East's number one maritime industry event.

CNT Tip: Take advantage of the event's proximity to Skydive Dubai and book yourself a jump over The Palm Islands!

When: 1–5 March 2016
(www.boatshowdubai.com)

THE EMIRATES AIRLINE FESTIVAL OF LITERATURE

This week-long festival is the largest celebration of literature in the region and draws people from all ages and backgrounds who love reading and writing.

CNT Tip: Listen in on tête-à-tête with acclaimed writers, join in cooking sessions with



PHOTOGRAPHS: GETTY IMAGES; 4 CORNERS; KARAN NEVATIA; TOM MORGAN/DEMOTIX/CORBIS; ART DUBAI 2014

EVENT CALENDAR

Delna Prakashan lists the attractions of this dazzling city.

CULTURE

Michelin-starred chefs and a panel discussion with leading Arab poets.

When: 8–12 March 2016
(www.emirateslitfest.com)

ART DUBAI

The event showcases a diverse line-up from around 90 local and global galleries. Educational initiatives for children, film programmes and artists' residencies are also on offer.

CNT Tip: Hop onto the ArtBus, a doodled bus, which provides guided tours of the city's prominent galleries, studios, art centres and spaces.

When: 16–19 March 2016
(www.artdubai.ae)

MIDDLE EAST FILM & COMIC CON

Meet your favourite comic artists, get signed souvenirs, watch exclusive previews, shop for limited-edition merchandise and connect with like-minded comic fans at the region's only event of this kind.

CNT Tip: Hire a fitting costume for the event from Mr Ben's Comic Con Costume Closet!

When: 7–9 April 2016
(www.mefcc.com)

RAMADAN IN DUBAI

Dubai welcomes the auspicious month of Ramadan with a host of public and private cultural events such as the community-run pop-up Ramadan Night Market held at the Dubai World Trade Centre.

CNT Tip: Learn how the fast is broken with a community meal at the Sheikh Mohammed Centre for Cultural Understanding (SMCCU).

When: Every year. Check Dubai calendar for exact dates
(www.dubaicalendar.ae)

DUBAI SUMMER SURPRISES

With shopping deals, beach activities, concerts, food events and pop-up markets, Dubai is undoubtedly a great destination for family summer holidays.

CNT Tip: This is a great time to enjoy reduced rates at five-star resorts.

When: 23 July –5 September 2015
(www.summerisdubai.com)

DUBAI SHOPPING FESTIVAL

Almost 20 years in the running, the DSF is one of the world's largest shopping and entertainment galas, attracting thousands of tourists every year. It's a shopaholic and deal gobbler's playground with one month to avail discounts and special offers across all product categories.

CNT Tip: Buy the famous DSF raffle ticket to win a 'life-changing prize'. Think luxury cars, cash and gold!



When: 1 January–1 February 2016
(www.dsfae)

DUBAI FOOD FESTIVAL

Dig into a month-long culinary celebration—from trade events and cook-offs to five-star gourmet dining and street food sampling.

CNT Tip: Go on a tasting spree with the convoy of homegrown concept food trucks stationed around the Jumeirah Beach.

When: February 2016
(www.dubaifoodfestival.com)

Left to right: Tasaday wins race 6 at Dubai World Cup Carnival ridden by De Sousa; a 38-metre yacht on display at the Dubai International Boat Show; John Abraham at the Dubai Film Festival; Anwar Jalal Shemza's works displayed at Art Dubai; belly dancing, part of the Dubai International Dance Festival; Dubai City Al Jumeirah mosque; a food truck at the Dubai Food Festival



ROOM WITH A VIEW

ONE&ONLY THE PALM, DUBAI THE GRAND PALM SUITE

There is the Dubai we know (and love): all glitzy skyscrapers and celebrity chefs and massive malls.

And then there is this: a Dubai that offers a suitably glamorous beach resort to escape it all.

Situated on The Palm, this One&Only hotel delights in its unique location, and quintessentially Arabian design and hospitality. You won't escape Dubai's luxury or wealth though: you'll find a mix of oligarchs, businessmen and their gorgeous girlfriends in designer swimwear lying around this snazzy pool, seemingly all day long. At night, guests emerge perfectly sun-kissed and dressed up to sip Champagne under the stars at the 101 Lounge, an oasis within this oasis, all plush white couches, billowing sheers and fire torches overlooking the Gulf. Then, the couples will return, giddy and giggling, to their beautiful rooms and suites with massive, well-annointed bathrooms with free-standing tubs and ornate chandeliers. In the morning, they'll emerge to feast al fresco on a spread of mezze, caviar and cheese (or maybe just to drink freshly-squeezed OJ with their sunglasses on) before heading to the nine-suite spa. Indeed, the only bums you'll find on this beach are terribly taut and tanned. What's not to like?

DIVIA THANI DASWANI

CONTACT *One&Only The Palm* (the.palm.oneandonlyresorts.com; from AED2,600 or £45,010)





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CHECK INTO ANOTHER WORLD

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